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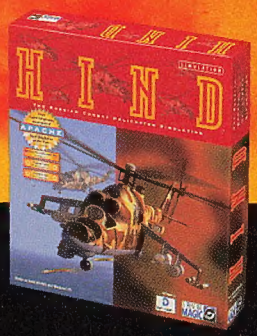

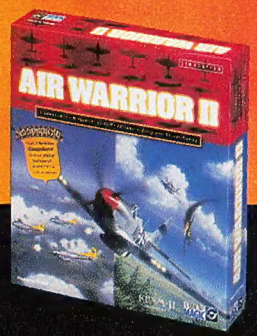

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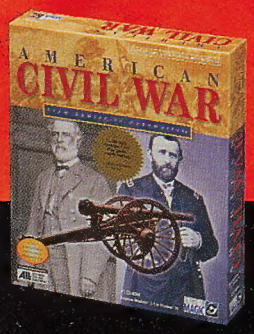

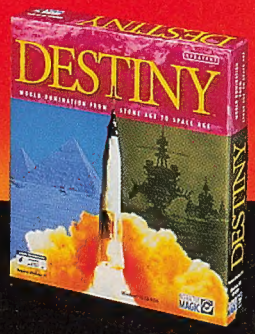

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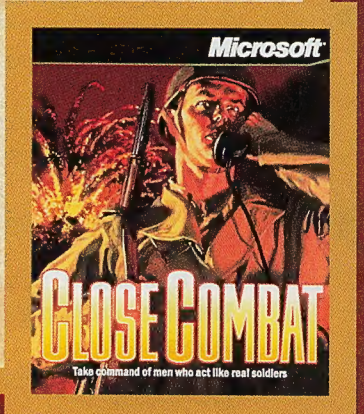

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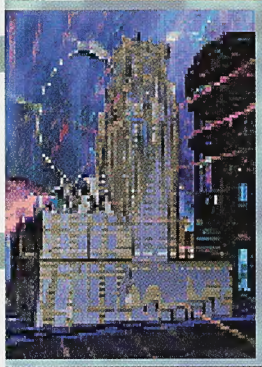

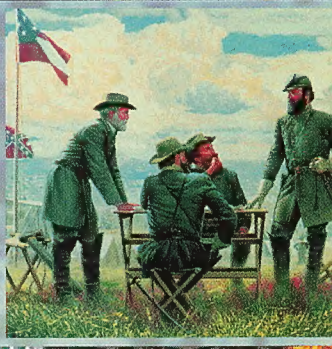

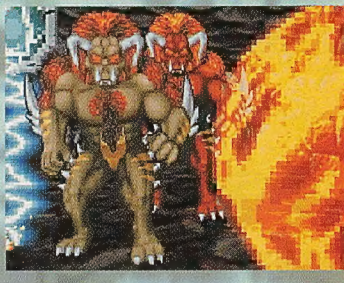

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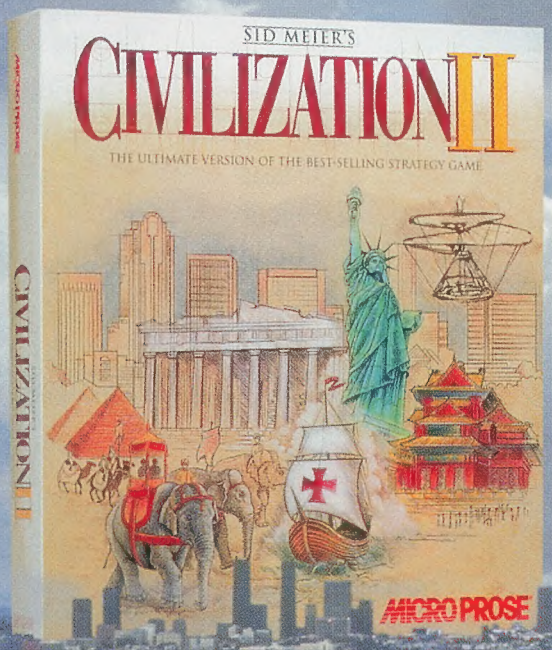

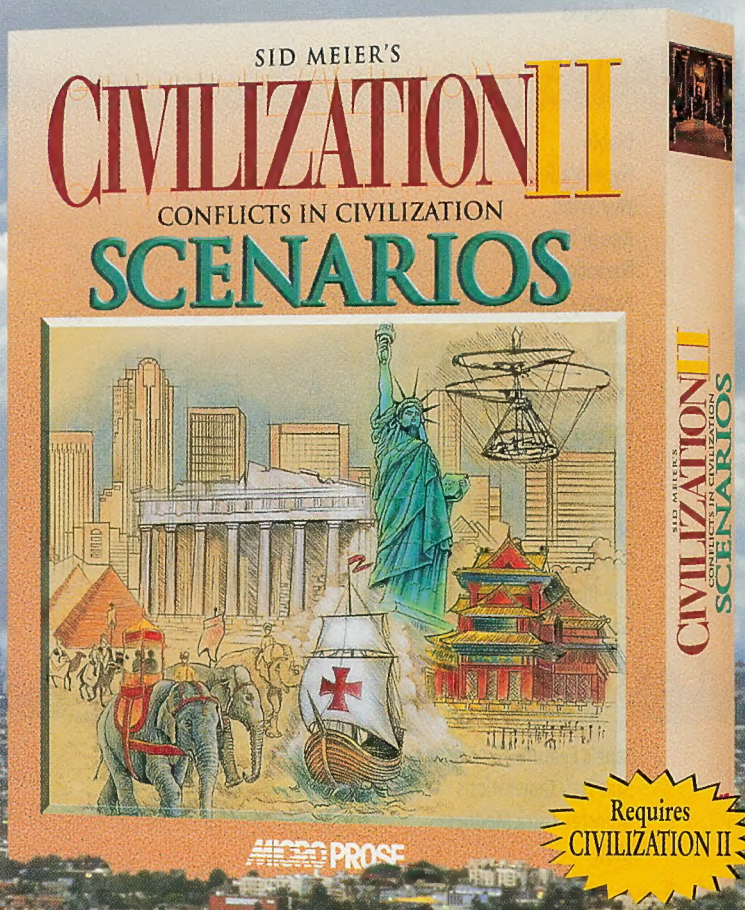

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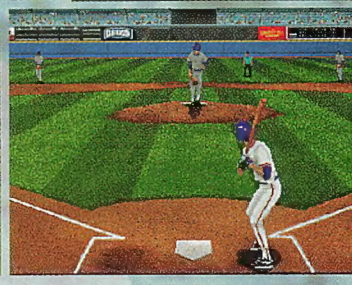

review ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★☆
Good	★★★☆☆
Fair	★★☆☆☆
Why?	★☆☆☆☆

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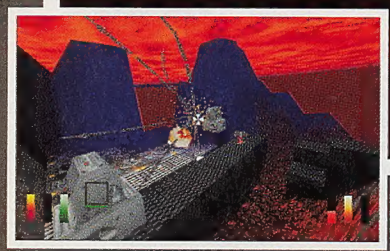

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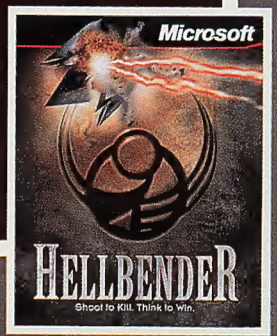

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Let's be fair

Avoiding confusion in previews and reviews

Because of a sudden illness in the family, Editor Steve Wartofsky asked me to fill in for him up here in the airy realms of the front of the magazine (Managing Editor Steve Bauman is off to England for the huge ECTS trade show; he'll be bringing you the complete skivy next month). "Yeow!" I thought, "The big time!" What cogent analysis of the computer games industry could I come up with on short notice? Probably not much, so I thought I'd fall back on the safety of talking about our little corner of it.

Since starting at *CGS+* last December, I've noticed a fairly common pattern in our readership of confusion over features, previews, and reviews. For example, one reader wrote in complaining about the lack of information in a "review" of a game in an issue from two years ago; going back to the issue I discovered that his "review" was actually a paragraph-long segment in the news section. Such confusion concerns me because it means that, to some extent, we're not doing our job well enough; because of this I thought I'd explain a bit about the structure of our editorial coverage.

Previews are our primary vehicle for getting you information regarding a game that's still in development. Previews come in many forms: news or short "first looks," full page previews, and features (all our features are previews, not reviews; a "featured" review is never called a feature, it just is generally longer and comes at the start of a particular section like strategy or simulation–for example, *Age of Rifles* is a "featured" review in the strategy section).

Something I can't state strongly enough is that *previews are not reviews*! They are not our evaluation of a game, but are intended to provide you information on what the game's features will be (or are supposed to be) when it releases. Sometimes a bit of excitement or negative opinion slips through, but generally we try to give "just the facts, ma'am." Many readers have written in asking us to give more opinion in previews, but we think this just isn't fair to either the developers of products or gamers; after all, the game just isn't finished, so all we can *really* talk about is what the developers hope to provide. As an example, Steve Bauman got to look at an early version of *Civilization II* and was somewhat underwhelmed; by the time the game shipped just a few months later, however, MicroProse had done so much finishing work that Steve rated the game five stars. If he'd put a negative spin into a preview, imagine the damage he could have done.

In a decade of paranoia (the X-Files Generation?), we're often accused of being in cahoots with advertisers because of what readers see as positive editorial in previews. There's not much I can say to that, except that I'm certainly not doing any "cahooting." Even so, you as a reader should still be wary of taking a preview as a positive endorsement of *a game that's not finished*. Because we're relying on information from a developer as to what the finished product is to be like, we're sometimes in the dangerous position of printing something that just doesn't come about (one word: *Outpost*); it's easy to become excited about possibilities (and too often we might let that excitement slip through), but when you read previews you should remember that we're really only talking about possibilities in a game–if a feature's in, it'll usually stay there, but not always!

While I'd love spend another few pages clarifying editorial policy, I'm sure you're more interested in reading about games so I'll cut off here. If you ever have a question or comment about the magazine's policies or structure, please feel free to contact us. Letters, phone, or e-mail (in addition to the addresses in the masthead, we now have e-mail at our desks; I'm sudell@cdmag.com), whichever you prefer–we love to talk to the public. Happy gaming!

–Scott Udell, Associate Editor

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Managing Editor	**Steve Bauman**
Editor	**Steve Wartofsky**
Associate Editors	**Scott Udell, Cindy Yans**
Demo Wrangler	**Peter Smith**
Production Director	**Ed Mitchell**
Creative Director	**David Powell**
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Ad Director	**Russ Hoefer** **Tel: 847-441-6452** **Fax: 847-441-6584** **E: rhoefer@cdmag.com**
Regional Advertising Managers	**Jeff Mather** **East Coast, Midwest** **Tel: 802 767-9144 X531** **Fax: 802 767-1124** **E: jmather@cdmag.com**
	Jeff Lubetkin **AZ, NM, NV, S. CA, TX** **Tel: 818 222-7516** **Fax: 818 222-7518** **E: jlubetki@cdmag.com**
	Pete Abruzzo **IL, N. CA, OR, UT, ID,** **WA, N.W. Canada** **Tel: 847-847-6473** **Fax: 847-441-6584** **E: pabruzzo@cdmag.com**
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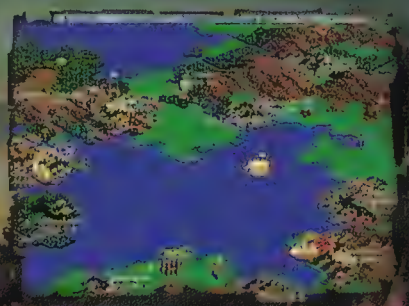

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The revolving door

Major departures shake up the top action-game producers

The departure of John Romero from id Software was the first of a minor exodus of game talent in the past month. People left such industry powers as 3D Realms and Papyrus as well, leading one to ponder what this may mean for all of these companies (of course, in this volatile industry, such changes and departures have historically been an almost seasonal norm, so the news isn't *that* surprising...).

Romero, who was the co-founder of id with programmer John Carmack, has formed a company currently called Dream Design. He will license the *Quake* engine and produce original games, much like Raven Software did with *Heretic* and *Hexen*. In a statement, Romero said that his new company "will allow me to focus on different type of games in addition to the first-person action genre," and he went on to say that "I wish id well and will miss working with all my friends and partners."

Romero's motives for leaving are his own, but rumors point to a rift over the direction id's games are taking (or lack thereof). The "design" for *Quake* changed repeatedly over the course of its development, and the level designer (Romero) is often at the mercy of the technology (headed by Carmack). Carmack stated online that "There will be no more grandiose statements about our future projects" with Romero gone (Romero was the id member who frequently went around saying how awesome *Quake* was going to be, earning the tag "The ego of id").

> ***Romero on his new company: "It will allow me to focus on different type of games in addition to the first-person action genre"***

If you look at id as a technology company headed by Carmack, then a designer doesn't really fit in that well. A cover story in *Wired* portrayed id as John Carmack's company (he was most prominent on the cover), as he dictated the changes in the game's design at various stages. By leaving id, Romero can now create the games he wants to, not what id wants him to, using the best technology in the business.

Romero's leaving came as a surprise, as did the exodus of the design talent that left 3D Realms. Biggest hit was the team working on *Prey*, their upcoming next-generation 3D shooter. The members, which include two programmers and Richard Gray, AKA "The Levelord," formed a company called Hipnotic Interactive, whose first project is to be a set of *Quake* levels. Another 3D Realms employee, Tom Hall, who was the Associate Producer on *Prey*, has left to join Romero at Dream Design. His leaving was expected, due to his long-standing friendship with Romero.

Rumors have the *Prey* team leaving, in part, because of a rift over finances. It seems the *Duke Nukem* team have been reaping the benefits of that smash, and it hadn't trickled down to the *Prey* team. Such is the cost of success.

In other news, five people left Papyrus to for a new company, 5D Games. They include Todd Farrington, who was a producer on *IndyCar Racing II*, Rich Curtis, Rick Genter, Dave Konieczny and Doug McCartney. They will be developing games for the Windows 95 and Macintosh platforms, the first of which is code-named *G-Zero*.

Finally, to the surprise of the entire industry, no one has left MicroProse this month (yet). – *Steve Bauman*

THQ to release Pax Imperia 2

Pax Imperia 2, now at a console company

THQ, the folks who inherited the rights to *Pax Imperia 2* when they purchased its developer, Heliotrope Studies, have told us that they plan to release the massive space-empire game instead of letting it disappear. Would-be emperors will, however, have to wait until at least the second quarter of '97 before they'll get to take war to the stars (see related story on page 28) – *Scott Udell*

Firaxis goes with Origin

Electronic Arts wins the bidding for the new powerhouse developer

Electronic Arts has acquired a minority equity interest in Firaxis Software, Inc., the company founded by Sid Meier, Jeff Briggs and Brian Reynolds. Firaxis will become an exclusive developer for Electronic Arts, and their titles will be released under the Origin brand name.

Meier, Briggs and Reynolds are all formerly with MicroProse and have worked on some of the finest products ever released for the PC: games like *Railroad Tycoon*, *Civilization*, *Pirates*, *F-15 Strike Eage*, *Colonization* and *Civilization II*. Andy Hollis of Origin, who worked at MicroProse and with Meier on some products, will serve as the Executive Producer for the future products (which won't see the light of day for at least two yeras).

Electronic Arts selected Firaxis because, according to Don Mattrick, Senior Vice President, "The Firaxis founders, Sid, Jeff and Brian, are titans in the entertainment software business. They have established a tremendous track record of success in our industry by creating original and innovative games. Their creative genius has pioneered many new technologies and gaming genres and we are delighted to welcome them as part of our team."

Sid Meier, Firaxis Chairman explained it thusly: "We wanted a relationship with a publisher that would allow creativity and the creation of quality games; we believe we'll have that in our relationship with Electronic Arts." – *Steve Bauman*

Mac gaming comes to Beantown

The MacWorld 96 report - we came, we saw, we sweat over the details

It's a MacWorld tradition: hot, steamy and disgusting weather. The city of Boston helps to enhance the effect by insuring you'll encounter plenty of construction as you try to navigate your overheating jalopy to one of the two convention sites. Advice from Boston natives is the same as it always is: "Take the T."

If you came to MacWorld ready to be overwhelmed by Mac games of all kinds, you'd be disappointed. Games took a decided back seat to Internet tools. However, there were a few real gems hiding in the aisles. The advent of cheap and fast PowerPC clones, and the relative ease of porting between MacOS and Windows 95 means that the Mac gaming market may finally be ready for a real upswing.

Dark Vengeance is Reality Byte's third person 3D action/adventure

Antennahead

This newcomer is led by two young gentlemen still in college. One is a computer engineer, the other a cognitive scientist. *Sanctity* is their flagship title. It's a networkable (16 players) 3D third-person action title featuring 60 vehicles that fly or drive or sail. The premise is that you've been dropped on an island with just your gun to take on an unnamed threat. Find a vehicle, jump in, and start beating on the enemy. *Screaming Cabala 2.0* is Antennahead's name for its 3D engine, and it is both fast and beautiful.

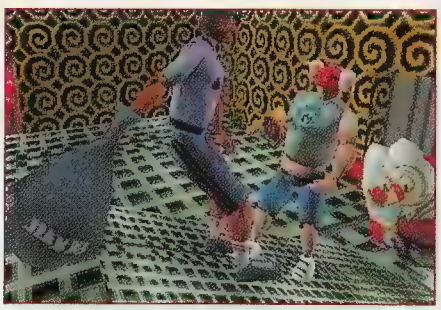
One point worth noting is that the company is giving away *Screaming Cabala* to freeware and shareware developers. You can find out more about *Cabala* on Antennahead's website (www.antennahead.com). These guys have the potential of being the next id Software… let's hope they don't end up with the egos to match.

Bungie Software

When you talk Mac gaming, the first company that springs to mind is Bungie. *Marathon* was everywhere at the show. Anyone showing off a new gaming peripheral, or a new system, or a new *anything* remotely related to games was running *Marathon*.

Marathon: Infinity is the next Mac iteration (with *Marathon 2 for Windows 95* also on the way) and it may be out by the time you read this. It is in some ways more-of-the-same, but we finally get a Bungie built level editor included with the game.

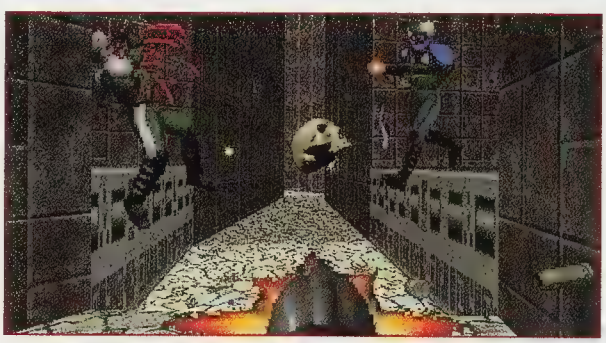
Weekend Warrior used to be called *Pillow Fighter* and is described as "*The Running Man* meets *Smash TV*," with a really healthy dose of humor. The good news is that the gameplay, featuring lots of "everyman" characters solving puzzles and duking it out with the weapons of their trade (network play supported), looks like a ton of fun. The bad news is that the game *requires* hardware acceleration.



The slightly deranged Weekend Warrior from Bungie

Changeling Inc.

Changeling Inc. is the entertainment publishing company that resulted from the breakup of Changeling Studios (Heliotrope Studios, of *Pax Imperia II* infamy, is the developer that came out of the same split). From them comes Hue Forest Entertainment's *Amber: Journeys Beyond,* which is reviewed on page 130. It places you in the role of an explorer attempting to cross over to the ethereal plane in order to help three souls break out of limbo.



Bungie's Marathon: Infinity, deathmatch style

Parsoft

A-10 Cuba! was the big buzz at the show, since it had just shipped for the Mac. Look for the Windows 95 version late this fall. More newsworthy was *Dogfight!* This WWII air combat sim features all the usual goodies: network play, a realistic flight model, photo-realistic cockpit art. But what really sets it apart are the graphics. The demo looked like it was running on a machine with hardware 3D acceleration, but it was all done in software. In particular, the engine uses a pixel level fog algorithm, lending a very realistic look to haze and clouds. Expect MacOS and Windows 95 versions at about the same time (a release date sometime in early '97, currently).

Reality Bytes

Dark Vengeance is coming along. This is a 3D third-person pseudo-medieval fighter, sort of a *Virtua Fighter* with shield and sword, and a dash of adventure tossed in for spice. The polygonal characters allow movement that is extremely fluid and lifelike. There will be an online version offered through Mpath.

Starplay

Souls in the System is the sequel to *Shadow Wraith*. It adds a level editor and modem and network play to the latter game's overhead, *SpaceWar* style controls and "find the right key to open the door" maze action.

Alley 19 Bowling also offers modem and network play. Better yet, it sports a retro 50's era theme (a big plus around our office). Pick yer bowler, pick yer ball and then use your mouse to replicate bowling action.

That pretty much wraps up the original titles being shown. There were also a few companies showing Mac ports of PC games (Looking Glass, Pulse, Access, to name a few). As I came to the end of the exhibit hall, I looked back at the PowerMac clone booth. The prices were really enticing, and I almost reached for my credit card. But thinking back over what I'd seen… nope, the Mac gaming scene isn't strong enough to justify an upgrade… yet. – *Peter Smith*

WEREWOLF vs COMANCHE 2
4 GAMES 2 CDs INSIDE
2 SINGLE PLAYER GAMES WITH MULTIPLAYER CAPABILITIES Via Modem or AppleTalk
MACINTOSH

Pick your poison: Russia's premier helicopter, the Werewolf, or the U.S.'s 21st-century Comanche. Either way, you're a flying fool, with more realism packed into two CDs than a tower buzz at Bagbdad Airport. Motion sickness bag not included. From NovaLogic.

MechWarrior 2 puts you in control of the BattleMech, the awesome 31st-century war machine. Customize one of 15 Mechs to fight in over 30 challenging missions against enemy Mechs. Ascend the ranks of your clan to become the ultimate MechWarrior. From Activision.

Heroes brings out the warlord in you—a fantasy/strategy game that puts you in command, recruiting heroes and their forces to battle up to three human or computer adversaries. What's at stake? Only the entire world, as you know it. From New World Computing.

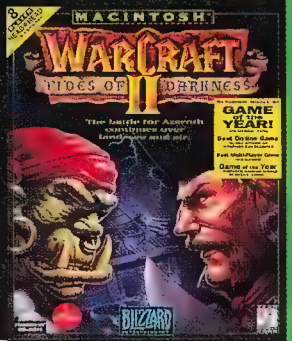
Gabriel Knight, the hero of the spine-tingling "Sins of the Father," scares the living pants off us once again as he solves this multiple mutilation murder tale, The Beast Within. You'll leave every light on in the house for a week after this one. From Sierra On-Line.

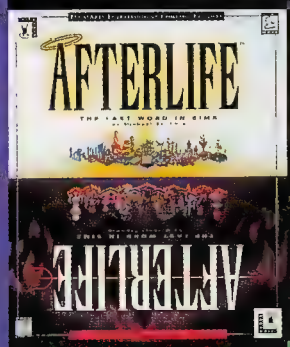
Never again feel the loss associated with finishing a game of Marathon. The third chapter brings it all full circle, and Bungie's own editing tools give you limitless power to create the adventures. We still recommend retina breaks every 30 hours or so. From Bungie.

Descent II's new 360° 3-D animation will keep you glued to the screen for hours as you battle an armada of crazed robots. You'll tap into a ton of cool, high-tech weaponry and all the wits and reflexes you can muster as you try to fight off the onslaught. From MacPlay.

Did you know that there's an actual strategy to going 220 mph? It's all laid out here, plus you can race to your heart's content with no fear of losing your license or melting a crankshaft. IndyCar is virtual decadence at its self-absorbed best. From Sierra On-Line.

WarCraft II, the best-selling PC game, now explodes on the Macintosh. Take command of either the ruthless Ocrs or the noble humans in your quest to rule the land of Azeroth. Make powerful new allies, battle terrifying new creatures, conquer new lands. From Blizzard Entertainment.





Become the omnipotent, godlike and somewhat goofy ruler of your own kingdom as you determine the final resting place of your "souls." Afterlife will have you laughing, or screaming, or possibly both as you try to figure out what to do with your new friends. From Lucas Arts.

Full Tilt! Pinball is as real as it gets. A truly realistic pinball experience on a computer. Accept the challenge of three mesmerizing pinball tables, each with its own photorealistic 3-D graphics, incredible sound effects and accurately modeled ball movement. From Maxis, Inc.

Here's a bunch

When it comes to cool games for the Mac,® the world is your virtual oyster. (And if you'd ever look up from your computer for a second, you'd know this.) So, while we're lucky enough to have your attention, know this: you can find great Mac software on the web, in pretty catalogs and lots of great places

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of cool games for the Mac. Even though research tells us you'll have a favorite and compulsively play it 46,658 times.

like Best Buy and CompUSA (understanding, of course, that leaving the house is unavoidable if you want to visit one of the stores). In fact, just short of beaming game code directly into your cerebral cortex via satellite, you can get your hands on the really good stuff almost any way you want. To begin your obsession with Mac software and to check out all these different ways to buy, get on the Internet and plant yourself in front of our web site at http://www.macsoftware.apple.com. Or, if you're into tradition, **call 800-500-4862**.

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7th Legion

Real-time robot strategy with a 'tude

"Oh, it's just another *Command & Conquer* clone" is a phrase I'm sure the folks at Epic MegaGames are tired of hearing about their upcoming real-time strategy game, *7th Legion*. Perhaps because of sentiments like this, and perhaps because, deep in their hearts, they felt there might be some truth to such concerns, Epic is delaying the release of *7th Legion*, pushing it back into early '97 so they'll have time to implement more features to distance the game from other *C&C/Warcraft II*-wanna-bes.

Defending your base with vehicles and troops...

Despite this reorientation, the game as it stands is already quite far along. Multi-player gameplay is in place, and can be quite a frenetic experience. As with *C&C* or *Warcraft*, you control groups of men and combat machines (in *7th Legion* these might be tanks or mechs..., err, hercs...., err, giant piloted robots) through a variety of missions. A unique feature is the ability to give "levels of emphasis" to your commands; instead of just move or attack, you can order a unit or units to do so aggressively or cautiously, to fall back or to hold the line.

One design change away from the *Command & Conquer* norm that's already been implemented is the elimination of resource collection; instead, you'll be given an initial budget and a bounty for each enemy unit destroyed, or for objectives achieved. One nice touch is a weighting in the bounty; if you take out a lone infantryman with a huge mech, you'll get a smaller payout than if you took out a big mech with a small infantryman – a realistic reward for doing more with less.

...or battle it out with giant walking robots

Perhaps reflecting Epic's arcade game past are the pace of the game and the number and variety of "power-ups" available to your forces: stealth add-ons, double speed, increased firepower, and (my favorite) the old "disguise yourself as a tree" powerup; they should all combine with the very pretty SVGA graphics and cool soundtrack (was that electric-bagpipe rock I heard?!) to give an interesting new take on the real-time strategy game. We'll be bringing you a more in-depth look at *7th Legion* as soon as more of the design changes have been implemented. – *Scott Udell*

BRIEFS: Get the name right, stupid – One of those "editorial snafus" resulted in us inadvertently calling Sierra's *Pro Pilot* by it's predecessors named, *Flight Assignment: Air Transport Pilot*. Apologies to all concerned... **Spying on Interplay** –Very early in the development process (still in design phase) at Interplay is a conversion of the boardgame *Spies!* from prolific publisher SPI (Simulations Publications Incorporated). Apparently a redesign of the boardgame is currently underway (no word on whether it will be released separately), with work on the computer game to start soon after. Don't expect this one until way into 1997... **More Glory at Sierra** – Lori and Corey Cole are doing the initial design work for the next *Quest for Glory* game, to be titled *Dragonfire* and will take place on a new island and feature multiplayer adventuring... **Rumor mill** – Rumors are flying that Peter Molyneux will be leaving Bullfrog. The official word

News from down under

SSG announces two major new projects for '97 release

Things have been pretty quiet on the SSG front for quite a while; aside from the ever-imminent release of *The Last Blitzkrieg* and some re-packaged versions of old game, there hasn't been anything of note. Well folks, that's going to change in '97 with the release of *Warlords III* and a completely revamped version of their classic space strategy game, *Reach for the Stars*.

While we've long suspected that *Warlords III* was in the works (see the March '96 Command Post), SSG has been reluctant to confirm the project. Therefore it was a bit of a surprise that the announcement came not from SSG but from Brøderbund, who will apparently be publishing the game for SSG (when contacted, SSG's US office wasn't aware of the Brøderbund deal, but wasn't surprised; apparently the two companies have had a friendly relationship that goes back years). While far from finalized (SSG is soliciting user ideas on their web site, **www.ssg.com.au**), there are some elements that are already being worked on: different "army sets" for each side, expanded heroes, expanded multiplayer support (including a real-time option for network play), a campaign mode, and an improved diplomacy system. Current planning is calling for a minimum system config of a 486/100 with 8 meg of RAM and a 2x CD-ROM; while a Mac version is also planned the system specs haven't been settled upon.

Completely out of the blue was SSG's announcement that it is going to be re-working it's classic space opera game, *Reach for the Stars*. While many people identify *Master of Orion* as the "classic" of the genre, *Reach for the Stars* is probably the true holder of the title, having many of the elements long before others: exploration, technology development, conquest, colony building, etc. The new version will be Windows 95 native with "new" everything: diplomacy system, tech/R&D system, space combat, etc. SVGA graphics and Network and modem play will be included, as will "a large range of scenarios from introductory level to full galactic conquest." While their web page didn't say, we've seen reports that Microsoft will be publishing the title for SSG, but at press time had yet to get confirmation of this from either company. – *Scott Udell*

Unlock the legend of the Knights Templar.

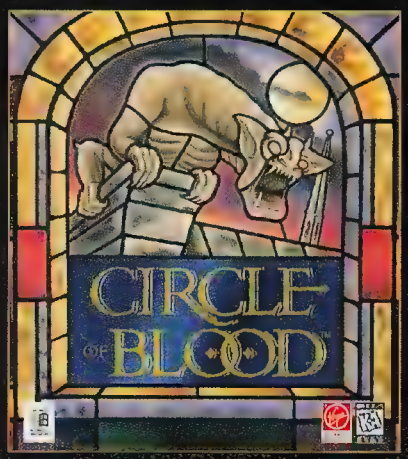
And discover a secret too frightening to unveil.

CIRCLE OF BLOOD

"With its lush, detailed animation, *Circle Of Blood* resembles the classic arcade game *Dragon's Lair*. But it seems this time the game will play as good as it looks."
– CD-ROM TODAY

- High resolution animations hand drawn with painstaking detail by Don Bluth Studios alumni *(All Dogs Go To Heaven* and *An American Tail)*
- Features a cinematic musical score from the talents of soundtrack producer Barrington Phelong *(Truly, Madly, Deeply* and *Nostradamus)*
- Available for Windows® 95/DOS CD-ROM and MAC CD-ROM

American George Stobbart happens into a Parisian cafe one afternoon because he wants a cup of coffee. But after a clown delivers a plastic explosive that blows the place to smithereens, all George Stobbart wants are some answers.



Buried deep beneath the bodies and the rubble of that explosion lies a fourteenth century medieval order called The Knights Templar. Only you can unlock the secret of this intriguing historical adventure and stop the vicious conspiracy that threatens to reshape the world.

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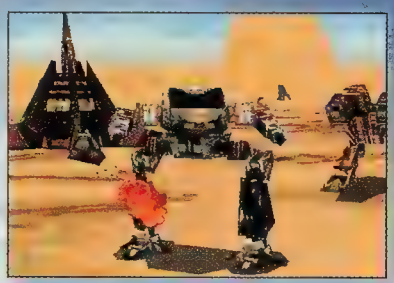
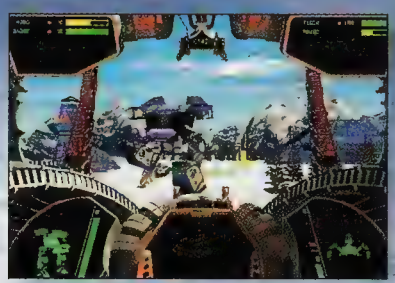
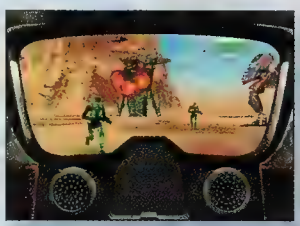
BLINK AND YOU'RE SCRAP METAL.



Eject from your HAWC, steal another. Bot-jacking is relatively legal here.

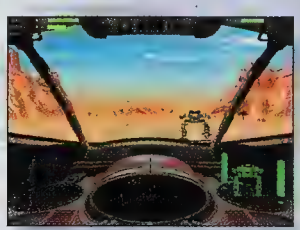


Wage war in everything from icy tundra to blistering desert. We suggest wearing layers.



Storm the enemy guard towers; try to avoid being turned into a red sinewy pile.

Destroy the enemy's HAWC delivery system and cut down on the number of missiles headed your way.



Communicate with wingmen via radio; share amusing anecdotes about global warfare.

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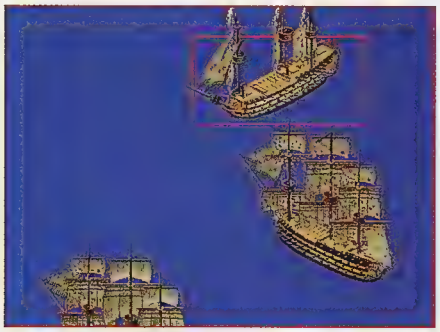
Age of Sail

TalonSoft hits the high seas

As we told you in last month's news section, TalonSoft surprised the wargaming world with the announcement of their first real-time *and* their first naval sim all wrapped up in one game: *Age of Sail*. They are very excited about the project, and if all comes to fruition gamers should be, too. As mentioned before, the game will cover the period from 1775 to 1820, with battles ranging from single ship engagements on up to the famous Battle of Trafalgar (TalonSoft tells us that with the scenario editor, the number of ships you can have in a battle is theoretically limited only by your free memory). You'll get to play as either France, Spain, England, or the US in the various engagements and in the campaign game.

A close-in view of a broadsides being fired
(note: these are preliminary shots missing some final graphic touches)



Savagery at sea! Note the battle damage (tattered sails) the ships now have

The database included in the game will be huge, with some 600 ships of all sorts listed by name. The game will have 13 ship "rates" (or classes); while technically there were only six, TalonSoft went with 13 to help rate the various ships against one another. They tell us maneuvering your ships (either as individual vessels or in squadrons) will be very easy. Ships will have eight movement directions, but instead of move increments the size of hexes or ship lengths they'll move by pixel, giving a much more fluid (err, sorry 'bout that) sense of movement than a board game can. The computer will track guns on each vessel (types and ranges varied, even on a single vessel), so you won't have the same effectiveness at long range (where only your big guns can shoot) as you do close-up.

Modem play of the game should almost certainly be working in the shipping product, and LAN play may also be included; Internet play won't be available until mid-Winter (it will be a free upgrade). While TalonSoft has been working (in secret) on *Age of Sails* on-and-off for a while now, the total time spent to-date on the project has only been about three months. Jim Rose, President of TalonSoft, estimates that 60-70% of the code was reused from the turn-based *Battleground* engine; that, combined with a programmer that Jim is very proud of, should get the game to us a month or so after you read this. – *Scott Udell*

from Electronic Arts is that he is working on, and will finish, ***Dungeon Keeper***, ***Syndicate Wars*** and ***Gene Wars***. Beyond that, we'll have to see… **Titles dropped** –Arsenal Publishing no longer plan to publish two games that had been slated for a 1997 release: ***Pacific Tide*** (a monster strategic-level wargame covering the entire Pacific Theatre during WW II) and ***Panzer's East***, the much awaited WW II-era follow-on to ***TacOps***. What effect the cancellation of *Panzer's East* will have on ***TacOps II*** (both designed by the same person, Major I.L. Holdridge) is, at this point, uncertain. ***Road to Moscow*** (turn the page), a strategic-level game of the Eastern Front during WW II, is still due to ship later this year, and ***Weapons Free*** (a modern naval wargame) is still on-schedule for sometime in 1997… **Can't stop that Schewpunkt** – Just in is the next in Schwerpunkt's ***War in the East*** series, ***Rostov***, with three scenarios covering the fighting near

Carmageddon

Vehicular mayhem for the entire family

If *Death Race 2000* is one of your favorite movies then you've found your game. SCi's *Carmageddon* is a 3D racing game where you have to try and kill and crash your way to the top. What sets it apart from a game like *Quarantine* (it mined a similar territory, albeit with little success) is that careful attention is being paid to the physics of each of the vehicles. Each car feels different from one another, with the game simulating all four wheels independently (external views verify this). The bigger cars have a higher center of gravity and more momentum. All four wheels are independently modeled, and cars can roll and pop wheelies.

The AI of the opposition is being given careful attention as well. Each of the computer-controlled cars has a style of driving depending on their vehicle, and they'll remember who knocked them off of that cliff a half-mile back.

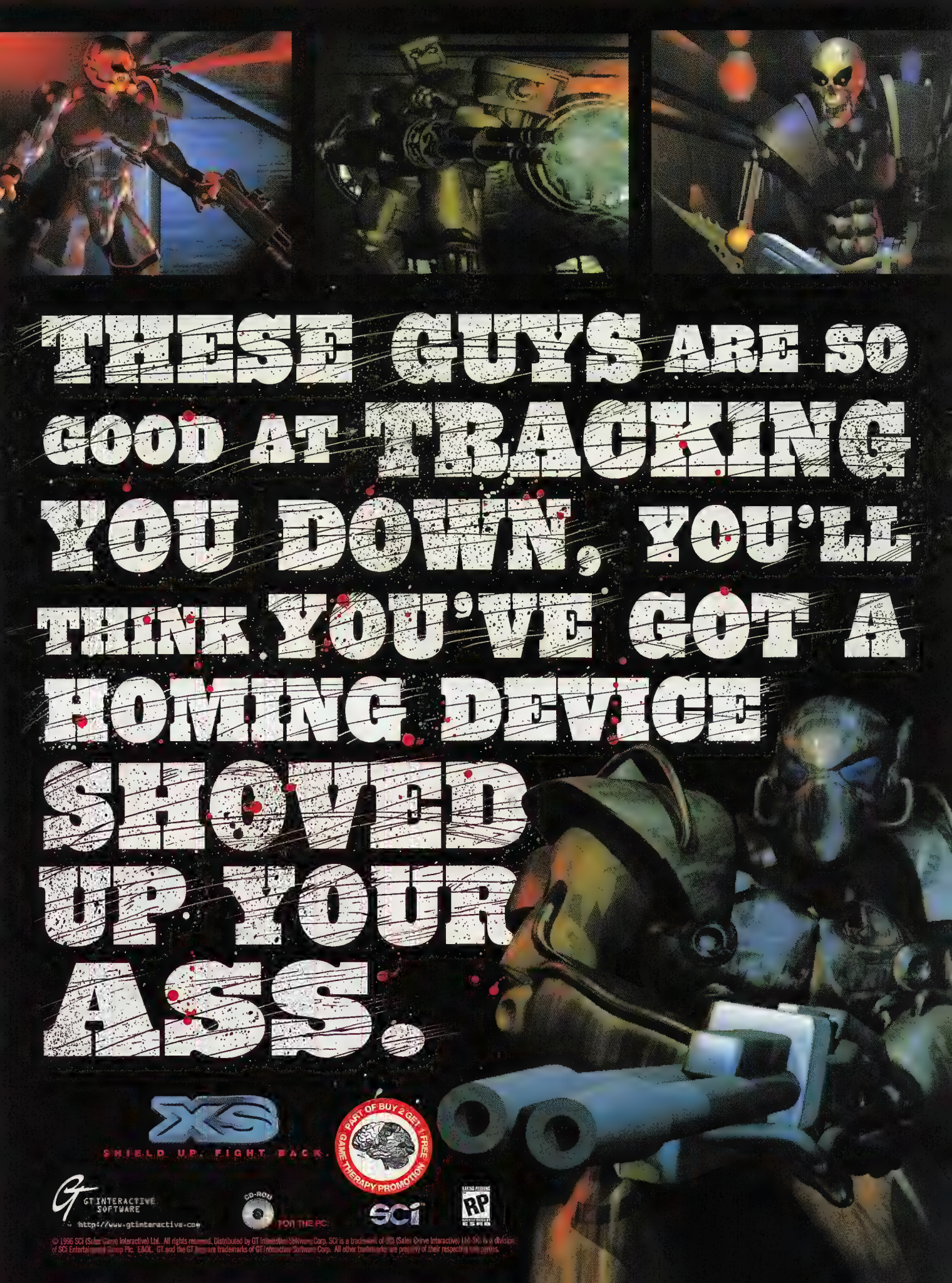
The in-car view of a vehicular homicide

You car accumulates damage as you drive around the different environments (five in all, with multiple tracks per). Damage accumulation is dynamic as with *Destruction Derby*, only it's quite a bit more impressive (cars look *really* damaged). A cool feature is the on-the-fly repairs, where the dented cars miraculously un-dent (remember the movie version of *Christine*?). Money is awarded for wanton death and destruction, with extra money awarded for killing more than one person at a time or for particularly stylish death scenes (like power-sliding into a crowd of people – hear their screams, see their body parts fly).

So bring the kids around the computer, fire up *Carmageddon* when it comes out early next year, and take in some fine family entertainment. The family that slays together stays together. – *Steve Bauman*

Get extra money for taking out more than one person at a time

THESE GUYS ARE SO GOOD AT TRACKING YOU DOWN, YOU'LL THINK YOU'VE GOT A HOMING DEVICE SHOVED UP YOUR ASS.



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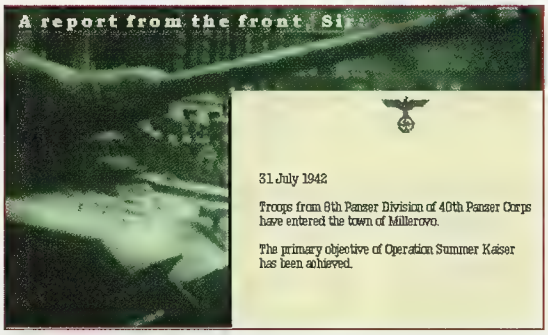
Road to Moscow

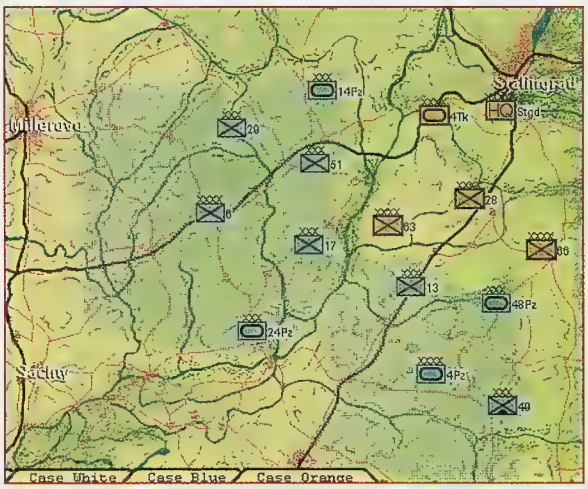
Arsenal takes a new approach to gaming the Eastern Front

Return to the Eastern Front of World War II (as either the head of the high command of the German or Soviet forces) in this new, *real-time*, strategic-level wargame from Arsenal Publishing. Yes, folks: real time (although perhaps continuous-time would be more apt; you won't be fighting out years second-by-second). Developer Battlefield Design Group has decided to throw out the old (and they might say stale) way of wargames in favor of a design that has me really excited. Out are things like hexes, stacking, strength points and turns, and in are things like road-transport capacity, proper frontages and phase lines, issues out of actual military operations which have been too difficult to implement in paper wargames and that, for the most part, haven't been implemented in computer wargames.


A report from the front, Sir
31 July 1942
Troops from 8th Panzer Division of 40th Panzer Corps have entered the town of Millerovo.
The primary objective of Operation Summer Kaiser has been achieved.

You'll have a computer staff that Battlefield Design Group tells us will function like a real staff, not a spreadsheet

The map will be huge (the equivalent of 24 square feet) and based on actual topological maps. As commander you'll plan your operations on the map, stating areas of operations, objectives, units, and timelines; then your staff will put together a plan and present it to you for approval. Of course, things are happening all across the Front as you do this, and your enemy won't sit still until it's his turn, so over-cautious activity can lead to disaster. Despite this real-time feature, this is *not* a *C&C* clone; it's a hard- core, serious wargame. If Arsenal and Battlefield Design Group can pull it off, *Road to Moscow* should do for strategic level wargaming what *Close Combat* has done for the tactical level. – *Scott Udell*



Just a portion of the huge map; note: no hexes or squares, and the unit markers just note the general position of corps and armies (their actual borders are realistically blurred)

Rostov on the Don River in 1941, '42, and '43. The fifth game in the series will be ***Izyum*** (due out late November), with five scenarios. Schwerpunkt also plans to upgrade all of its earlier games to the *Izyum* code (current owners will be able to upgrade for $10 or so per game). Work will then start on the next five games in the series, and two new series: ***War in the South*** and ***War in the West***. Give 'em a buzz at (713) 997-1209 and tell them *CGS+* sent you… **AOL's latest Gem** – ***Gemstone: DragonRealms***, that is. AOL now has this new role-playing game from Simutronics. So why aren't you an AOL subscriber? Need the software? I've got a couple thousand here. Oh, and they went ahead and bought ***The ImagiNation Network*** the other day as well. All in a days work for the nations largest online service…**Microsoft invests in gaming company** – If you can't beat 'em, buy 'em. Microsoft has taken a minority interest in a gaming

SWIV

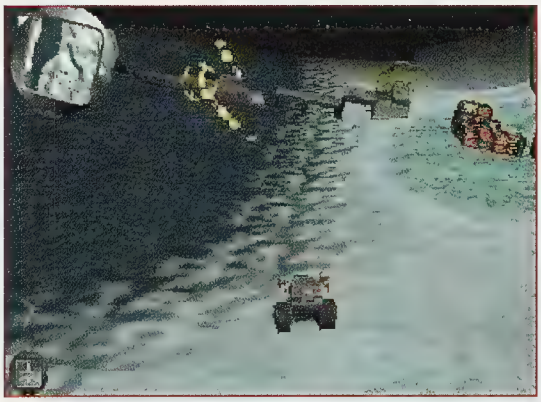
The modern 3D Defender

So you're sitting there playing *Terminal Velocity* and you're saying to yourself, "Y'know, this game is too much like a flight sim. I like 3D games, but I wish it were more senseless, sorta like a 3D version of *Defender*."

Say hello to *SWIV*, the game you've been waiting all your life for, a 3D version of a 1991 scrolling shoot 'em up for the Spectrum. Its brainless arcade action (that's a compliment) is a throwback to the days when the only cut scenes a game had were those little bits that showed you how many points you got for blowing up each ship.

Up to 100 things to blow up on screen at a time

It does have cut scenes, and one of those pulsating techno soundtracks, but more importantly the emphasis is on pure arcade action. Visually, the game features an incredibly fast and superb looking 3D engine, one that allows up to 100 moving objects on the screen at one time. You'll get a good view of the different terrain-types as you fly and drive around, blowing things up and collecting power-ups (but watch our for the debris – it can damage your ship).



Explore the scenery, then blow it up

With Pentium Pro and MMX optimized versions planned, the destruction of Windows 95 begins this coming holiday season (OK, there's a DOS version as well, but it didn't sound as cool). – *Steve Bauman*

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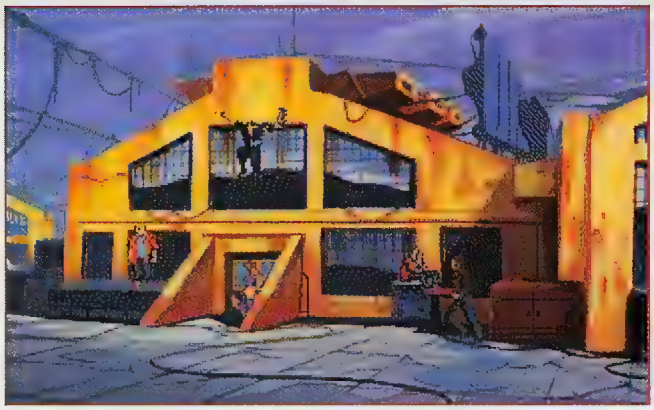
Neo-Hunter

I'm goin' back to Calia, goin' back to Calia



The well-armed guy in the middle is jumping with joy over another endless arcade sequence

A few years ago, LucasArts was showing off a new game developed by Ronin Entertainment, a company founded by *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* co-designer Edward Kilham. That game, *Calia 2095*, was eventually dropped, without any reason.

It's back. *Neo-Hunter: Calia 2095* is that game, a somewhat bizarre hybrid of adventure puzzle-solving and rail-shooter action which features an incredibly distinctive look and feel. You assume the role of Rick Gage, a bounty detective operating in Calia. Calia was once California, but it severed its ties to the US both literally and figuratively, declaring independence after a massive earthquake turned it into an island.

A prominent US Senator has been assassinated, and guess whose job it is to track down the killer? You have to gather clues, while keeping your cash flow going by taking other jobs. You'll find evidence that you'll have to research via DNA sampling and other cool high-tech doo-dads. This part of the game seems to be quite promising and interesting.

It's the other part of the game where things get weird. When you arrive at most locations, you take part in some comically over-the-top battles with bad guys, slaughtering people right and left (or at least initially, stunning them). If you off enough guys, you capture the bad guy and can make some cash or extract some information, but these combat scenes, which play out a bit like an "homage" to *Virtua Cop* (it's more of a mouse target practice than anything) are likely to be controversial.

With a story from novelist Orson Scott Card (who did some dialogue work on *The Dig*, for better or worse) and a cartoon look straight out of the house of LucasArts, *Neo-Hunter* should be shooting its way into stores in November. – *Steve Bauman*

Got you in my sights...

Cool cut scenes set up the action

company, SingleTrac Entertainment. SingleTrac is responsible for the console games *Twisted Metal* and *Warhawk*. As part of the deal, Microsoft gets the rights to several upcoming PC games... **Rendition finally ready** – Rendition has finally started shipments of its highly regarded **Verite** chipset. Creative Labs will be the first to market with it... **Diamond's newest monster** – Diamond has started shipping a new card called the **Monster 3D** to OEM manufacturers (NEC is the first). The card incorporates the **3DFx** chipset, making one wonder about the future of the **Virge** found in their own **Stealth 3D**... **Grand Prix II helps Villenuve** – A real-world testament of the PC's ability to do a proper simulation, Formula One driver and former IndyCar champion Jacques Villeneuve used MicroProse's *Grand Prix II* to help him win the pole for the Belgian Grand Prix. IndyCar drivers have in the past used *IndyCar Racing* for that purpose as well... ■

Big Brother

"Ignorance is strength"

Published in 1949, George Orwell's novel *1984* bears the definitive warning that the preservation of human consciousness is endangered by the emergence of a totalitarian government fueled by high technology. This masterpiece has probably appeared at one time or another on every reading list in the nation and finally, we see it emerge as a computer game prototype under the working title of *Big Brother*. It's about time as a large piece of the multimedia target market is known to gravitate towards futuristic, science fiction and utopian fiction.

Newspeak Media is a multimedia packager and intellectual property rights holder, formed by film producers John Tarnoff and Ava Lazar and attorney Marvin Rosenblum. Newspeak, in conjunction with distributor MediaX, believes that this title will be the first in an emerging line of "high-concept" pre-sold, classic properties and concepts.

Big Brother will be a third person adventure using high-res, photo-realistic backgrounds with 3-D characters. It is heavily story based, which will not feature Orwell's beloved Winston Smith, but will introduce a new lead character. The protagonist will be a young proletarian soldier how has just returned from one of the endless wars waged by the Ingsoc Party. He must find his missing fiancee who may have escaped to a place known as New Iberia. But does it exist at all?

Anyone who has dreamed about this particular property blossoming into an interactive adventure (and who have probably bought *Normality* as a substitute) can look to the future. Beware the Thought Police, for actualization of the concept "freedom is slavery" cannot be far away... – *Cindy Yans*

QUAKEWORLD

An online war

The latest news to ooze out of id Software (aside from Romero's departure) is that John Carmack is at work on *QuakeWorld*, the mother of all *Quake* servers. It's main purpose will be to serve as a giant arena for worldwide *Quake*-rs to disembowel each other, with a ranking system to track frags and individual statistics, allowing one fine human to be claimed the best *Quake* player in the world. As if the world needed more egos associated with *Quake*...

In related news, id is looking for *Quake* gangs, er, clans. If you have five fellow *Quake* geeks, a web site devoted to just how cool you really are and a logo (render it for extra cool points), hop on over to **www.idsoftware.com** to register your clan. – *Steve Bauman*

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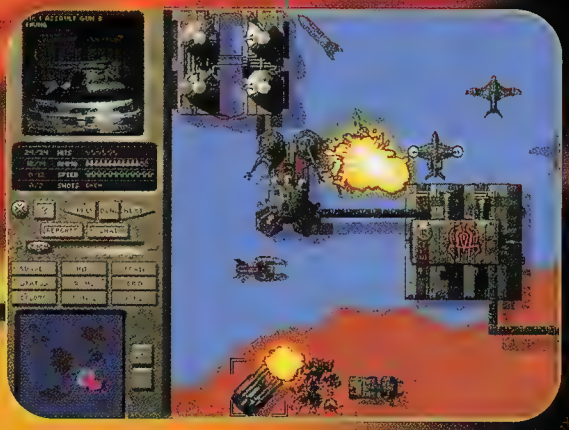
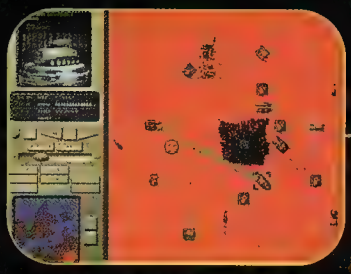


Stunning "top down" view SVGA graphics and battle units rendered from 3D models pack an astounding visual punch



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A Blizzard hits

Two strong-looking titles and more on the way

One of the new models for Starcraft - hey, didn't this guy read the surgeon general's report on smoking?

While they're not resting on their *Warcraft II* laurels, the folks at Blizzard are definitely taking the time to make sure their next titles are quality gaming experiences. They've already given up on one title (*Pax Imperia 2*) because, according to some comments we've heard, it just didn't meet their fun factor. However, development on *Diablo* and *Starcraft* continues with a vengeance, as does work on the *battle.net* service and at least one as-yet unnamed action game.

Diablo, a real-time RPG game supporting up to four players, should be out by the time you read this. The version shown us has come a long way since the alpha we had for our E3 coverage of the game, with only some of the quest and multi-player left to add. The game should be out by the time you read this, so if you're curious check out this month's CD for the single-level demo.

Diablo, shipping "when it's ready"

Starcraft's release has been pushed back until late Winter/early Spring of '97, in part to separate it from the pack of strategy game releases around Christmas and in part to polish the game further. As you may have read here last month, the designers are reworking the graphic look of the game and adding planetary and station-based, quest-like scenarios. The alpha they showed us during their visit to the *CGS+* offices looks quite a bit different than the one they showed at E3. From *Warcraft II* they've kept maybe 25% of the code and a few other things (like the mouse interface); the rest is pure *Starcraft*.

Both games will run over their new, free (!) Internet-based gaming service, *battle.net* (in fact, alphas of *Starcraft* are already being tested over an in-house version of *battle.net*). *battle.net* has a simple goal: bring players together to play the games. Unlike many of the for-fee services, *battle.net* won't actually manage the games being played; once a group of gamers have met on-line, *battle.net* will get them started and then let Internet communications between the individuals' computers handle the work. This greatly reduces the system load on *battle.net* (and the cost to Blizzard). Blizzard feels that *battle.net* isn't a threat to the for fee on-line services because it won't provide the optimal latency (*i.e.*, speed) they will; while it will match you with other players with the best possible latency, if you want to play friends Tim in Australia and Sally in England, you'll get better results with a for-fee service.

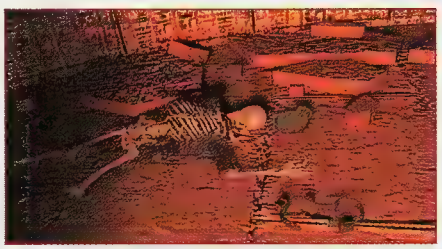
While they didn't have a working product to show us, they were quite excited about an as-yet-unnamed action game they have in the works. While its roots are in classic top-down action shooters, they aim to make it appeal to the wider computer game audience through the use of puzzle elements, increased ship capabilities, and "massive" multiplayer support (up to 16 players on a LAN). Also in the works are *Warcraft* combo product called *Warchest* (both games and the expansions for Mac & PC on one CD, coming in December), a console version *Warcraft*, and even a *Warcraft* novel. What we *couldn't* get them to admit to was *Warcraft III*, and given the delay in *Starcraft* I suspect it will be sometime before they have anything to say on it one way or the other. – *Scott Udell*

FIRST LOOK

Mummy:Tomb of the Pharoah

You kiss your mummy with that mouth?

Ewwwww, he's covered with centuries of mildew and dripping bandages and scummy slime all over your living room! He's Uncle Hymie from Hackensack — the one who smelled bad but Mom always made you kiss anyway. Phew! Nope; not Uncle Hymie at all... it's the classic movie monster, The Mummy. What a relief.



Norma Rae waited just a tad long for negotiation talks with management

Somewhat removed from that particular mummy cliché, but sodden anyway in ancient Egyptian legend is Interplay's *Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh*, created by Amazing Media. Await a mysterious adventure which will take you deep beneath the catacombs of ancient Alexandria. The raising of a mysterious hieroglyphic chest whispers to the world a secret — there is an enigmatic world below, known previously only to the dead in its midst. Now miners are beginning to fear that their site is cursed, and refuse to work. Wearing sandwich boards and little else (since it is very warm in Egypt), they stand firmly in their picket lines, Norma Rae on their shoulders, shouting, "Union Un-ion Un-ion."

You, a strike buster, er, *facilitator* for National Mining Company are sent there to straighten the bums out...to *investigate*,

Norma Rae looks stunning in this season's hottest labor union sheath

yeah, that's it. After an initial sweaty glance, you discover the existence of the tombs, the spirits who have been disturbed and the intruders causing said disturbance. Malcolm McDowell stars as your nemesis, the relentless Mr. Davenport, in a mission to guard the Pharaoh's tomb and all that lies within...at the risk of your life. What are you to gain? Prestige, perhaps the secret to immortality, but probably best of all, the lowering of Norma Rae like a national flag at sunset. – *Cindy Yans*

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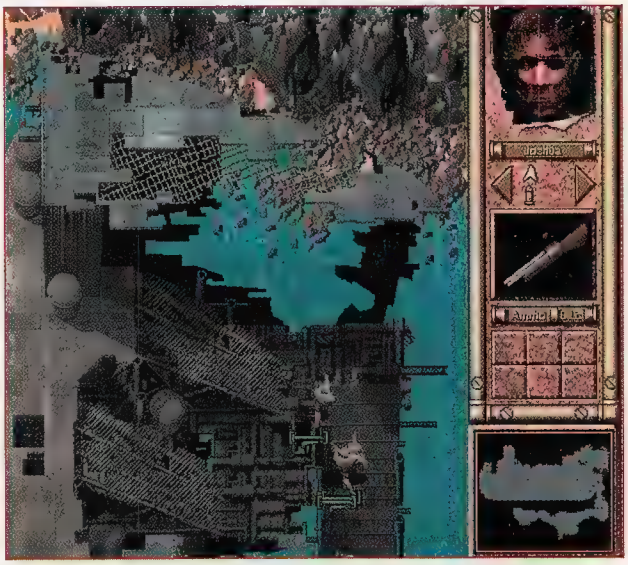
Waterworld: The Quest for Dryland

The movie was a washout; can Interplay turn it into the next wave in strategy games?

The problem with signing a licensing deal of any sort–book, toy, or computer game–on something like a movie is that the movie could be a dud, leaving your development efforts in risk; despite the reception of *Waterworld* at the box office, Interplay is apparently going ahead with the project (although its release has slipped into '97, perhaps as a way to distance the game from the movie?). For the few folks who missed the pre-release hype for the movie, the poles have melted and the continents have flooded; survivors scavenge for pure water, food, and the few bits of dirt, dreaming of the day that they will find the near-mythical "DryLand." Imagine Mad Max meets Flipper and you get the picture.

In the game, you'll take on the role of Warchief of a group of atollers, charged with ensuring the survival of your clan against enemies such as the Laymen, Smokers, Orgainos, and Choppers. You can equip your Atollers with 16 different weapons (flame-throwers, machine guns, and grenades are just a few), various craft like jet skis and rocket barges, and fight your way in real time through a variety of offensive and defensive missions. Resource management and technological development will play a part as well.

On the eye-candy side you'll maneuver (in real-time) across "3D rendered terrain" and get over 30 minutes of footage that wasn't used in the film itself. As it stands now, two player network and modem options will be included, but with the delayed release, we'll have to wait to see what directions the final product will take. – *Scott Udell*



The life of an Atoller, living and fighting and dying on cobbled together platforms on the vast Oceana Terra

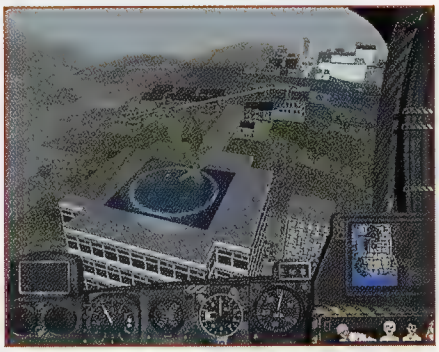
SimCopter

Flying the friendly sim-skies

Your initial response to hearing the name *SimCopter* may be, "Ah, a helicopter simulation." Well, *SimCopter* isn't a simulation, though it at least features a helicopter. Its main draw (and it's a bit tough to understand until tried) is that it allows you to fly around your *SimCity* creations in 3D. Who hasn't wanted to walk or fly around one of your more creative towns?

There's much more to the game than just flying around, enjoying the sim-view of your sim-city. You fly various "crisis management" missions where, from the air, you'll help control riots, rescue sims from sinking boats and burning buildings, play traffic controller and more. A career mode allows you to go from town to town, with more advanced helicopters and equipment in each new town.

As you would expect, you can import your own sim cities from *SimCity 2000*. Some towns created, such as those made up entirely of Arcologies, make for boring flying zones. However, towns with much diversity are incredibly fun to fly through. Whether the game has legs (or would that be blades?) remains to be seen; however, the 3D engine devised for *SimCopter* will also be used in another sim-product, *The Streets of SimCity*, which is, believe it or not, a driving game (duh!). Finally, don't be surprised if the next version of *SimCity* features 3D graphics as well. – *Steve Bauman*



Tour-de-Sim

Riana Rouge

Vigilantes on estrogen

She's bad. She's sultry. She's got thighs all the way up to... She's *Riana Rouge*, one of Konami's bullets aimed at the interactive adventure scene. Initially an abused secretary with low self esteem, Riana must have been fetching coffee one day when she stopped, snapped and was transformed into Duke Nukem with breasts.

Unlike the Duke, however, Riana (actually the player as Riana) decides how to confront situations with *emotion* rather than adrenaline. Choose sadness, passion, caution, envy, gluttony, sloth.. .and see which action results. The game's milieu lies across six fantasy worlds from the Evil Fun House (where your evil twin must be lurking in evil mirrors) to the World of Indulgence (bacchanalians rejoice!), and employs live action video, computer generated special effects, 3-D animated characters and 3-D environments.

Konami announces this title as the first in a *series* of Riana games. Two versions are planned, one for teens (TEEN rating) and one for adults (M+ rating). The adult version promises to "push the envelope on the graphic violence with full on blood, guts, decapitation and the erotic elements with several exciting encounters along the way." And as speculated here by my colleague earlier this year, "the teen version will be the one no one will buy."

The creator and embodiment of our heroine is none other than the lovely and lusty Gillian Bonner, *Playboy* Playmate turned entrepreneur. "...I will take you through my journey of growth and physical experiences that turn me into a strong, intense, sexual, physical, empowered female creature..." OK, Gillian, we're game – actually *you* are. Now about those thighs... – *Cindy Yans*

Fashions by Victoria's Blatancy

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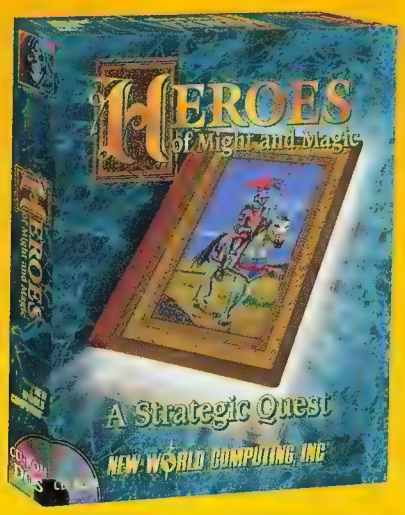
-Computer Gaming World

"Turn Based Strategy Game Of The Year"

-Computer Games Strategy Plus

[Great Year!]



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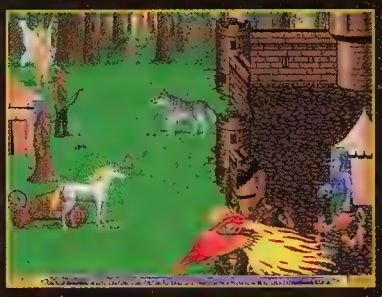

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CG RATED

A new Criterion for gamers

Criterion Studios aims for a mixture of action, strategy and adventure

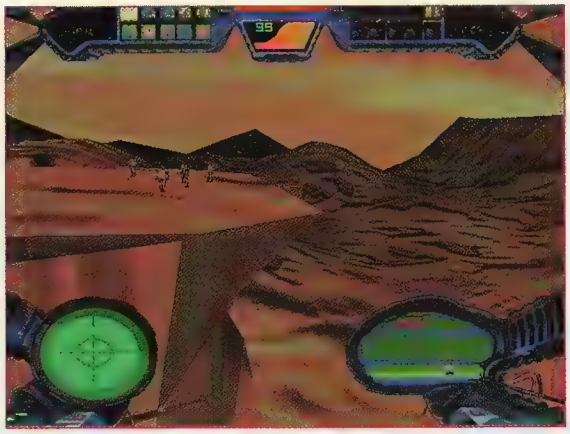
In the course of their business lives, many small developers have to consider the option of tying themselves to a larger enterprise, either a large game publisher or someone from outside the computer gaming industry. While going this route usually holds big rewards in the form of resources (especially money and people) and distribution, there is always the fear that it will also lead to loss of control and creativity. But what about when things happen in the opposite direction, when a larger entity spins off a smaller creature, specifically to do games? What you may get is something like Criterion Studios, a new developer from the UK aiming to destroy the stereotype of "ugly British games."

Criterion Studios, formed just this January, is a division of Criterion Software (which has its roots in a Canon division, Canon Research Europe). While you may not have heard of either Criterion, you've likely seen or heard about Criterion Software's key product *RenderWare*, a "real-time 3D graphics library." *RenderWare*, released "way back" in 1993, has been licensed to over 800 PC developers (many of them game developers), and has helped make fluid, high-color 3D animation available to PC owners without expensive accelerator hardware. Criterion Studios, a collection of game developers, artists, modellers and programmers, was formed to make use of the technical expertise of their parent Criterion Software, and combine it with many creative talents to release games that, in their words, "blend technological 3D supremacy with innovative gameplay."

Currently, Criterion has three titles in development, all of which should be released in the next six months (through Virgin Interactive). The first title, which should be shipping in Europe by the time you read this, is an "action/strategy game" named *Scorched Planet*. *Scorched Planet* draws its gameplay themes quite unabashedly from the classic arcade game *Defender*; instead of a goal to blast everything in sight (although you can do that, too), your mission is to save the colonists of Dator 5, peoples threatened by the "rampaging Voraxian hordes." While the "lone-hero-saves-all" theme is hardly original, the gameplay, as they say, is the thing.

You control a unique vehicle in this 3D world, one which morphs between a tank and a flying craft. In tank form you can pick up colonists (or troops) and regenerate fuel; in plane form you can move quickly about the battlefield and fly the colonists to safety through a stellar gateway. As you accomplish such tasks, of course, the multi-formed Voraxians are trying their best to bring you and the colonists to grief. "Yeah, yeah," you say, "so it's *Defender* in 3D with morphing vehicles; big deal!" True, to a point, but if you were to walk away now, you'd miss the "strategy game" elements, the things that look to lift *Scorched Planet* above the level of the typical "pretty faced, empty headed" action game. Each level will offer a variety of tactical challenges: do you rescue all the colonists in one town immediately, or do you use them to scavenge for material for your craft while you defend another town? You have three towns to empty, but the Voraxians are already assaulting two of them – can you move armed troops into place to defend them? Your craft starts one scenario so that it can't morph into a plane, so how are you to get the colonists through the gate? Hmm... wonder what those hang gliders are for...? You get the idea.

Criterion uses its RenderWare technology to greatly enhance game visuals - here's the beautiful undersea realms of Sub-Culture



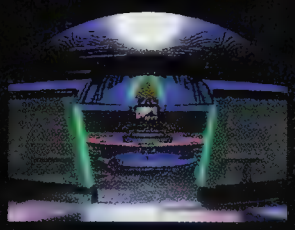
In a homage to the classic old arcade game Defender, your ultimate goal in Scorched Planet is to save people

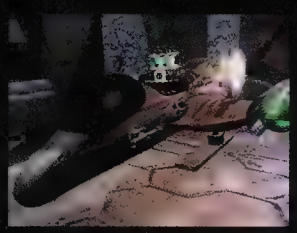
The next two games, both due for release in early '97, are *Sub-Culture* and *Aqua'Tak* (a working title). *Sub-Culture*, with perhaps a bit less action and a lot more adventure, is easily the best looking of the three. The game takes you beneath the surface of the sea into a beautiful, true 3D world (complete with crevices, overhangs, and caves). Your goal will be to bring two warring cultures together against the greater threat to all...pollution from human beings. The game is *very* free-form; if you wish, you can just wander about observing life underwater (although Criterion warns us that after about 40 hours of this the problems you've ignored lead to the destruction of your world). Instead of wandering, you'll want to accept a variety of missions (in any order), always remembering that it is up to you to unite a warring peoples and save the world.

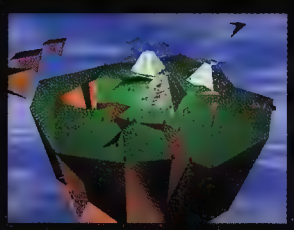
Aqua'tak–Racing boats, guns, and hi-res graphics; what more could you want?

Aqua'Tak is an action game pure-and-simple. Choose your powerboat, arm it, and battle through four different watery courses; Criterion believes this is the action title that can take on and perhaps defeat the console action game market. As with *Scorched Planet*, *Aqua'Tak* will feature network play, but it will also allow split-screen play from the same PC. – *Scott Udell*

SURF AND DESTROY™







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where?

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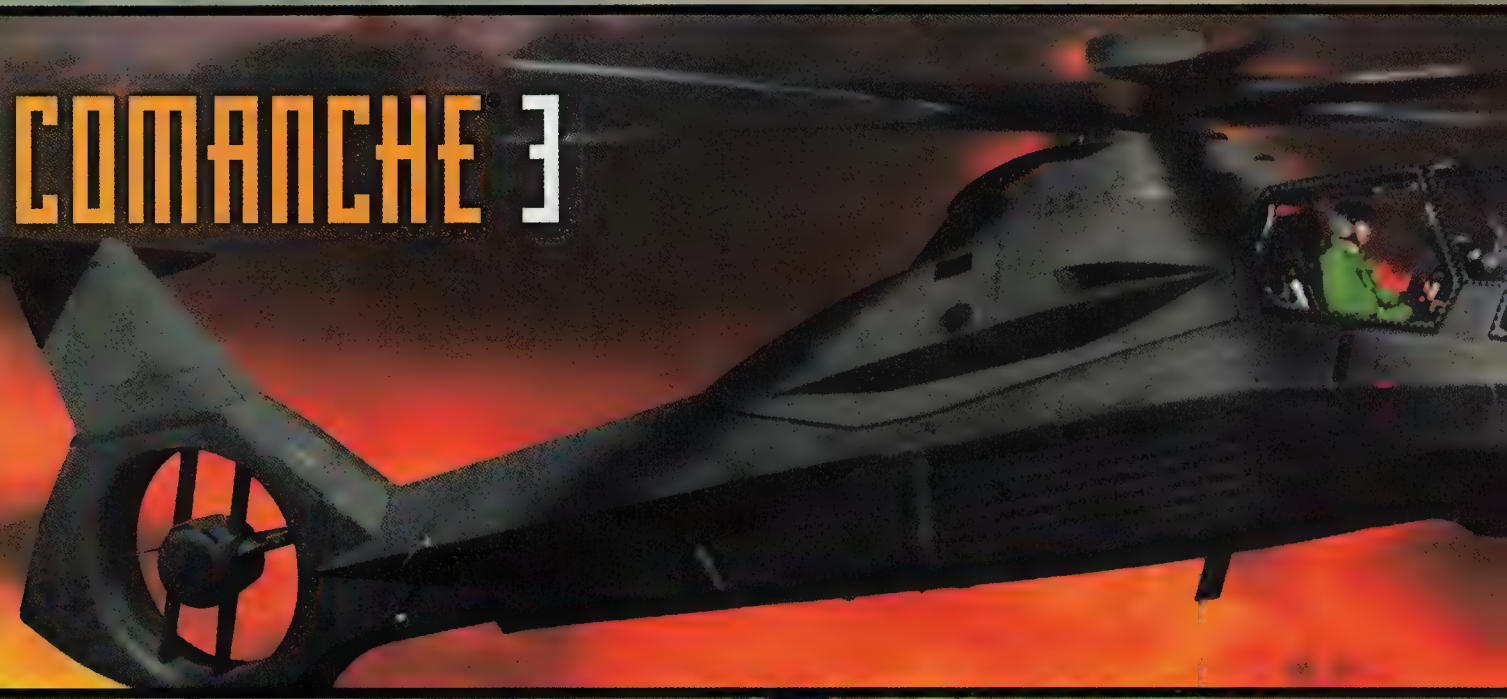
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Computer Gaming World
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- Glenn Broderick
Computer Player
September 1996

"Easy to play and still over the top in battle situations, not only will this version [Comanche 3] be plain fun, it'll look as fabulous upon arrival as the original Comanche did."
- Computer Games Strategy Plus
August 1996

"Still pictures can't do justice to the smoothness and beauty produced by Voxel Space 2. Players will have to see the game [Armored Fist 2- M1A2 Abrams] for themselves to appreciate just how groundbreaking NovaLogic's 3D engine really is."
- Next Generation
August 1996

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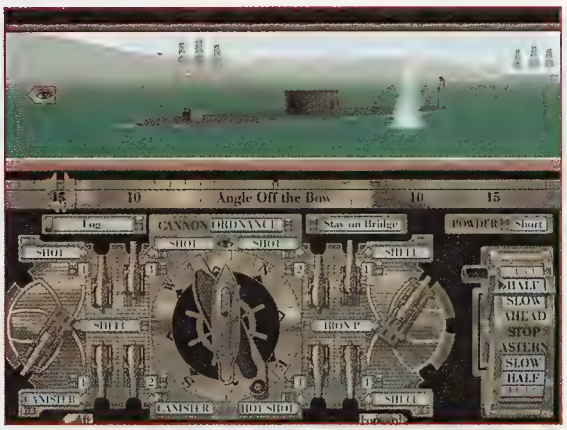
NOVALOGIC - THE ART OF WAR™

They're not just books anymore

Grolier enters the computer gaming fray with three upcoming titles

Most people hear the name Grolier and they think books… encyclopedias and those long-ago school papers. Well folks, throw away those old impressions, because Grolier is plunging into the computer game world. They dropped by the *CGS+* offices the other day to fill us in on three of the titles we should be seeing soon.



Battle of the Ironclads: The battle heats up (as seen from inside the Pilot's House of the CSS Virginia)

Players will be able to watch a recreation of the actual battle from many different perspectives

A turning point in naval warfare

For the "serious" side of gaming is Grolier's upcoming *The Battle of the Ironclads*, a combination simulation/wargame, which focuses on the little-gamed arena of combat between the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Virginia* (*a.k.a. Merrimack*) – the famous "Ironclads" of the Civil War. It is in this title that Grolier's background is most thoroughly revealed, as the research efforts put into it are incredible. Both ships have been recreated in exacting detail, using everything from engineering diagrams to logs to letters from the crew.

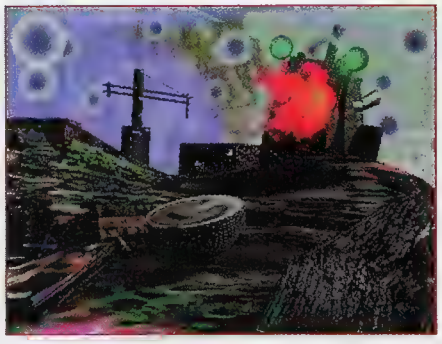
Even if you ignore the game aspects of the package, there'll be plenty to do in this Windows 95-only package; you can wander the ships, get a guided tour, and examine reams of information on the vessels and their famous historical conflict. If you wish, you can have the computer play out the actual battle via the simulation engine, letting you observe the action from places like the pilot house, gun turret, or captains' charts.

While all this should be fascinating, gamers want a game, and that's certainly there as well. You'll of course be able to recreate the actual battle, or you'll be able to play in career mode with realistic mission types – escort, blockade, search and destroy, capture, etc. – against the actual ships (ironclad or standard) which operated in the area of Hampton Roads, VA. You can set the AI levels for the captains of other ships. Grolier tells us that it is a "learning AI"– it will improve with you – and that it uses that darling of industry buzzwords, fuzzy logic. Of course, if you want to try your hand at naval command against a friend from the other side of the Mason-Dixon line, you'll be able to, with the multi-player feature.

The realistic detail you'll see when wandering the ships has been extended to the modeling going on during combat. The *Virginia* wasn't armored all the way down; as the game progresses and the ship's weight is lessened, it rides higher in the water, thus exposing a vulnerable band of wood. When aimed straight forward, the *Monitor*'s gun would deafen the captain when fired; when you shoot the gun, your speakers will put out a ringing sound for a couple of minutes, making it hard to hear communications from your crew. Orders to other ships in your fleets (for scenarios which have them) are line-of-site (via signal flags).

After the actual historical battle, both ships received upgrades, which you can either choose to try out in the historical recreation as an option ("Hmm, I wonder how it would have gone if the *Virginia* had armor-piercing shells?") or during the simulated campaign.

Banzai's got to avoid some pretty nasty ground-based defenses in the form of this bug-sprayin' momma



Surf and Destroy after the application of Firewalker textures

Similarly, you can try your hand at commanding crews with different levels of experience; there'll be a noticeable difference in factors like reaction times and accuracy between green crews and experienced ones.

Firewalker's proving ground

From detailed historical sim we move on to Grolier's action game *cum* technology demonstrator, *Surf and Destroy*. The technology we're talking about is the *Firewalker* "authoring tool" and 3D engine from computer graphics giant Silicon Graphics.

Described as an "interactive 3D maze game," *Surf and Destroy* is not a *Doom*-clone; rather, it seems to share more with the upcoming Nintendo 64 platform game *Mario 64*. As the protagonist, it'll be your job to enter cyberspace and fight your way through eleven virtual worlds connected by seven "toobs" tunnels, all twisted by a virus. The worlds you'll navigate have a very open, three-dimensional feel to them. While currently a first-person perspective game, a third-person mode is under consideration, as is support for 3D accelerator cards.

This bug's riding a divine wind

On the whimsical end of the Grolier's gaming scale is *Banzai Bug!*, the game we can confidently call "the best bug flight simulator ever" (well, okay, so it's also the *only* bug flight sim). Our hero Banzai, trapped in the house of an exterminator and must work to drive the evil humans from it. Banzai will end up flying a variety of strangely realistic missions throughout the eight rooms of the house (escort missions, dogfights, bombing etc.). Each mission will feature a number of different waves; the tactics you use on one may not work on later waves, especially as your opponents will begin to learn your methods and will counter them. All told, a strange adventure in a tiny world made large. – *Scott Udell*

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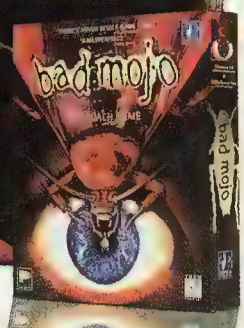

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What's up at MicroProse

The safe and secure path may lead them down the road to recovery

Nietzsche once suggested that what doesn't kill you will make you stronger (the Nazis took this idea a *little* too far...). If this is true and you could classify MicroProse's recent woes as life-threatening, the latest crop of products (those shipping, about to or soon to be shipped) certainly suggests a sounder future. The MicroProse game plan is clear: produce top quality sequels or add-ons, and develop derivative works to proven winners. While this relatively safe and secure path may not lead to ground breaking, innovative new genres, this seems to be a trend among many of the other entertainment software giants as well. With the blockbuster release of *World Circuit Racing: Grand Prix II* leading the way, the rest of the MicroProse line-up previewed at a recent showing has the potential to be as impressive or better. Understandably, that's one tall order and it's still too early to tell for sure how things will turn out, but here's a quick rundown of what's on deck.

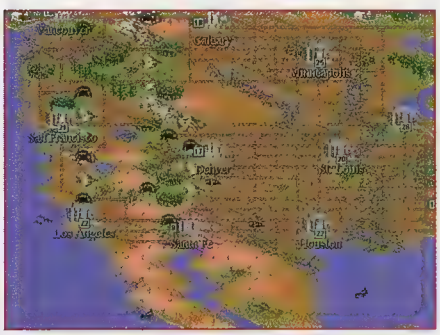
The long awaited X-COM: Apocalypse is on the way

Civilization II Scenarios

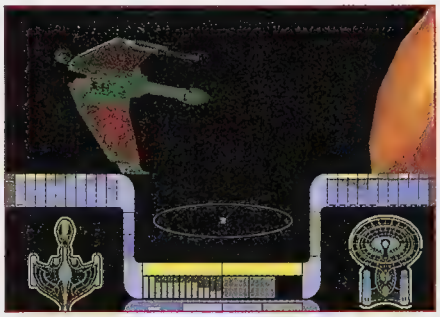
Civilization fans rejoice! The *Civilization 2 Scenarios* add-on is almost completed. What's there to say? It's more scenarios for the same great strategy hit. This single CD-ROM will contain 20 brand new scenarios, 8 of which were designed by avid *Civilization II* players. What you have to look forward to ranges from Alexander the Great (225 BC - 322 BC) to Alien Invasion (Sometime in the Future) and beyond - After the Holocaust (2010 AD - 2040 AD).

Where everyone has gone before? Star Trek Generations

Following in the footsteps of the previously released *Star Trek: A Final Unity*, this installment of the *Star Trek* licensed property follows the basic story line of the popular movie of the same title - Picard and Kirk team up to rid the universe of the evil, star-killing Soran.



Recognize this place? More Civilization scenarios to devote your entire existence to



Fight off those nasty Klingons in Star Trek Generations

Not covered here but still shown, Master of Orion II is slated for an end of the year release

Very few movie tie-in games in the past have been successful; the great majority probably should have been placed in an open airlock. Of course, the *Star Trek* adventure products previously released by Interplay and Spectrum Holobyte have been winners. Nevertheless, *Generations* takes a slightly different slant to insure that it doesn't fall prey to tie-in travesty. Approximately two thirds of the story of *Generations* is completely new, and although we weren't privy to the new story, it was revealed that Kirk does not have to get killed (contrary to his fate in the movie).

Plot lines aside, the player must traverse the multiple path storyline with three types of gameplay. First there is the strategy section in stellar cartography (an interactive star map), where the player is given the opportunity to scan 10 different solar systems, their accompanying planets and starships in search of Soran.

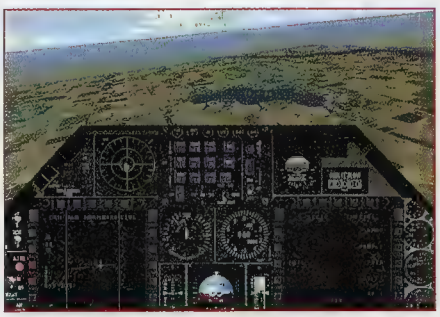
The second part of the game is space combat. This is where you take control of the helm and blast Klingon Bird of Preys and other starships into itty bitty pieces. You'll be faced with the usual hand eye coordination, power management and command skills.

However, the most notable feature of *Generations* is found in the third, graphics adventure part of the game; it is first person. Instead of looking on to the action from a TV camera view, you'll now play the game from a *Doom*-like first person perspective. While such a setup might bring to mind *Dark Forces,* in the *Star Trek* universe, shoot-em-up mindless violence has been kept to a minimum (not only would that sort of thing go against Starfleet doctrine, understandably, it would probably incense the *Star Trek* licensers). The player is instead sent out on multiple "away missions" as *Star Trek* characters and must solve puzzles, sneak or run around and blast Romulans and other baddies (how could they resist?).

In one particular mission you're on the Enterprise and get to explore parts of the galaxy's most popular starship accurately depicted from *Star Trek* blueprints. There is no network play as this is strictly an adventure type game with some simulation and mild strategy elements to keep things interesting. However, while the voices, sounds, artwork and movie clips are unmistakably pure *Star Trek*, with all the combined elements, you probably won't need to be a Trekker to find something entertaining. Expect *Generations* to warp in to stores sometime in the first half of 1997.

They're back! X-COM: Apocalypse

Just after you thought you got rid of those pesky aliens (of the X-rtra-terrestrial nature)



Nothing like a new Falcon to force you into a hardware upgrade

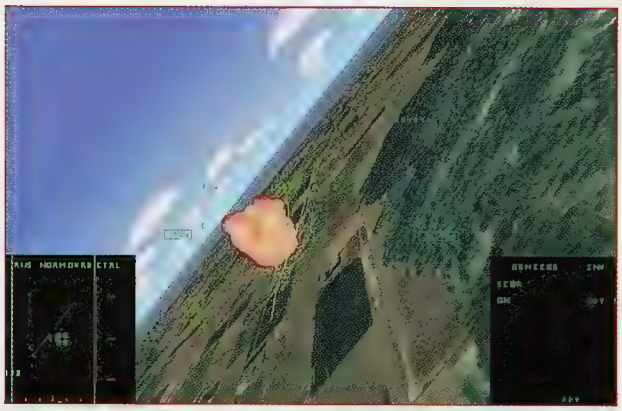
once and for all, they develop an inter-dimensional gateway and come back with another fiendish attempt to take over the human society –only this time, they're able to assume human form. Julien and Nick Gollop of Mythos (developers of the original *X-COM: UFO Defense*), seem to have set out to make the definitive *X-COM* combat strategy game. While everything that made *X-COM* a hit (finance, research models , etc.) remains, there are several things that distinct this installment of *X-COM* from its predecessors. First and foremost is that, instead of taking place over several areas, *Apocalypse* takes place in a self-contained city named Megalopolis; one of the refuges from Earth's environmental problems. While at first glance that may seem too limited an area for *X-COM* vets, in actuality, this mega-city is extremely detailed. It contains a myriad of multi-floor buildings that dwarf many of the areas explored in the past episodes. But it doesn't end there; since you don't know who's an alien or who's an alien sympathizer, there is much investigative work to be done. Although we didn't see any examples of it, we're told that *Apocalypse* will feature unparalleled character interaction. On another level, you'll be faced with Godzilla like aliens and mother ships to battle. Finally, the culmination of your alien research will lead you to an attack on the invaders alien world. As if that wasn't enough to get your mouse finger twitching, to further sweeten the pot, the player is given the option to play the enhanced 640x480 SVGA graphics in the traditional turn based method or in real time. The clincher is that you can either try your skills against enhanced computer AI or other "life forms" in eight player LAN mode. This Windows friendly, DOS-based, alien invasion is expected first half 1997.

Holy XCOPY! Agents of Justice

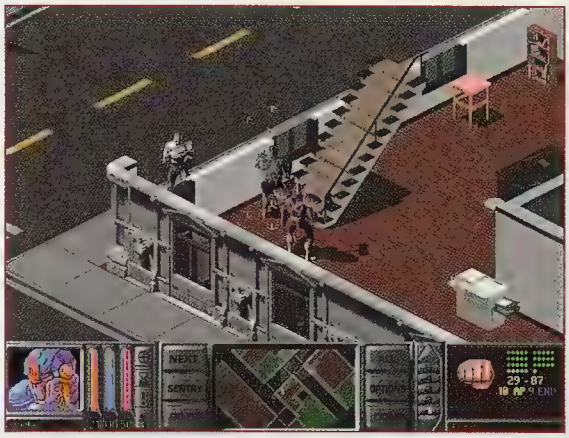
What would you get if you combined the latest multi-player *X-COM* with the *X-Men*? While it wouldn't be an exactly fair analogy, it would probably be pretty darn close to the heart of *Agents of Justice*. Here's the scenario: in the year 2091 super-powered mutants have emerged. Three groups of evil super-powered villains are bent on destruction and world domination. Now it's up to you and the rest of the Star Council to stop them and save mankind. Although you would swear that this new strategy combat game is based on the *X-COM* engine, it isn't. We were told that the designers just happen to be *X-COM* fanatics. Well, it shows. *X-COM* vets will feel right at home with the familiar isometric view interface. However, instead of collecting money and technology, in *Agents* you collect fame and trade that to add or enhance your skills or train other agents. Both villains and heroes have user adjustable powers and skills which adds a role playing element to the mixture. Overall, *Agents* takes a lighter approach where *X-COM* is fervent combat. While combat remains pivotal, being able to fly and use your toxic blast adds a new dimension to this popular genre. Get your cape ready, *Agents of Justice* will mutate mid 1997.

Falcon 4.0

This highly anticipated simulation has attracted much coverage recently.



Falcon 4.0 - a lot to live up to, but already delivering amazing visuals



Agents of Justice - real-time X-COM-style superhero action

What superhero game would be complete without nearly naked babe heroes? (sigh)

However, there are some rumors that should be set straight: the only code from *Top Gun* is some internal network code. The familiar *Falcon 3.0* padlock view was not killed. Full front cockpit view (ala *Falcon 3.0*) is still there – we saw it. All of the obvious flight model "bugs" have been fixed; we flew it.

The current build was running with an early version of Creative Labs *3D PCI-Blaster* at 18-20 frames on a P-166 and 8-10 on a non-3D SVGA card. While it's easy to be impressed that in-flight re-fueling will be a part of *Falcon 4.0*, we had mixed emotions that there will be no random traffic in the campaign. *Falcon 4.0* is reported to be on track and will be ready in the middle of '97.

On the horizon

The much anticipated sequel to *1942: Pacific Air War*, *European Air War* and *Vette 2* were not previewed at this session. However, there was also some talk about a *Grand Prix 2* update of the 1996 F1 season. We'll keep you posted as information becomes available. – *Ben Chiu*

BattleTech: Honor Bound

Battle the Jade Falcon clan in this real-time strategy game

MicroProse has announced that it will be publishing the its first game in the *BattleTech* universe since it acquired rights to a number of FASA properties. Being developed by the FASA Interactive Technologies, you can be sure that this will be one title faithful to the famous boardgame/role playing universe. In something of a surprise, this first game will take the form of a real-time strategy game instead of an in-the-mech simulator. The game will have an isometric view from which you'll command a unit (or lance) of BattleMechs (up to 24 can be in combat at one time). In addition to combat, it'll be your job as commander to manage supplies, adjust your unit's organization, and see to the health and status of your troops and your 'mechs as you attempt to regain your homeland from the more powerful Jade Falcon Clan.

MicroProse is promising the now-standard SVGA graphics and multi-player play over LAN and modem, and says that the game will be available sometime in the middle of 1997. – *Scott Udell*

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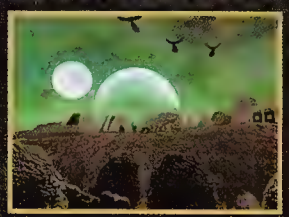

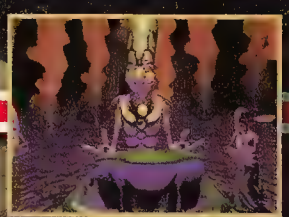

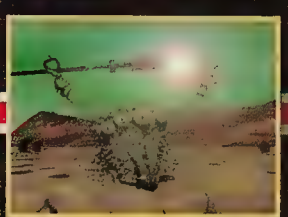

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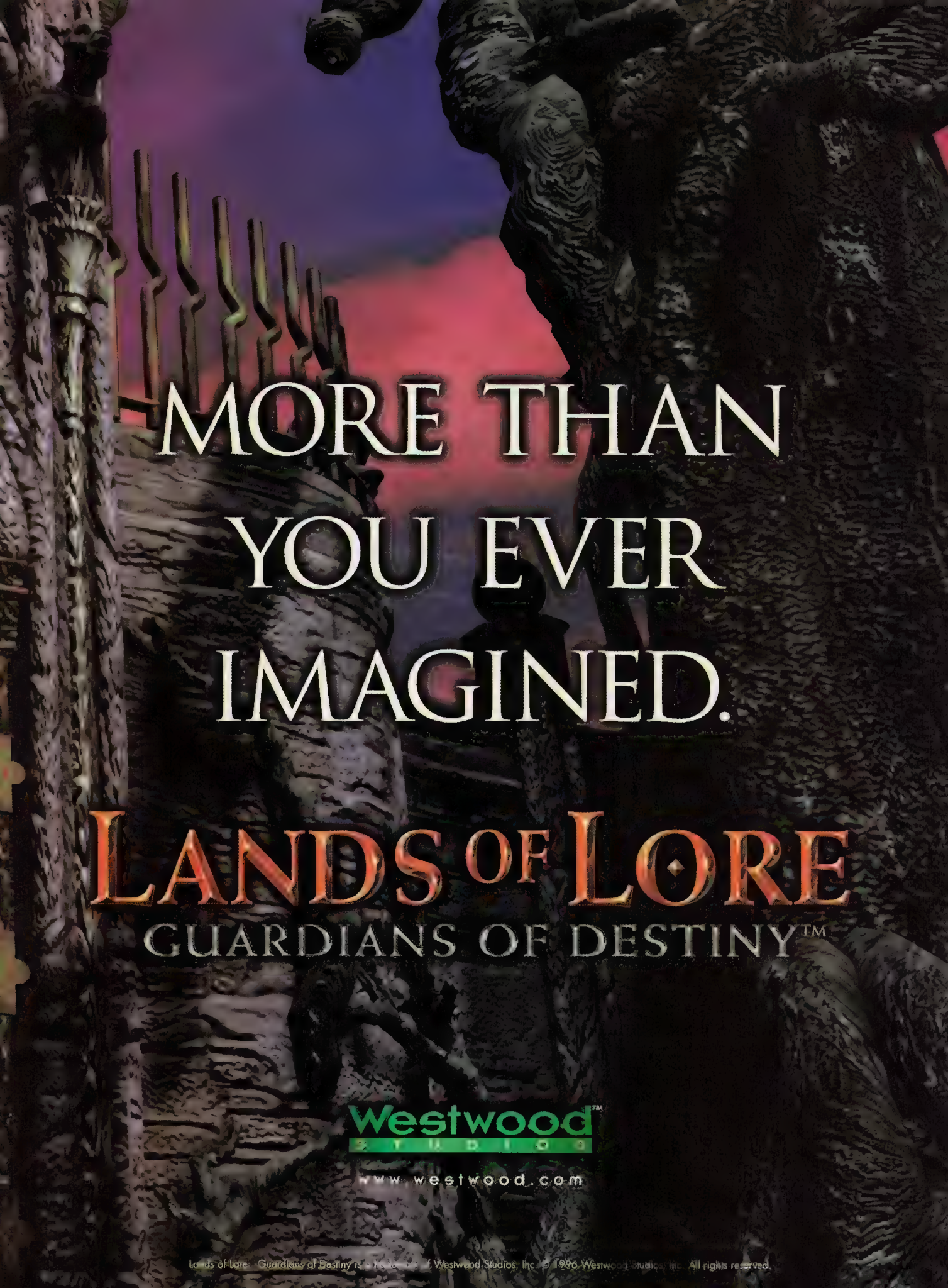
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A Hero's Welcome

New World revisits Enroth with Heroes of Might and Magic II

by Scott Udell

'Might' and 'magic,' two words that just demand to be noticed, words that are worth a thousand pictures–adventures, wizards, epic quests, you choose it from the realms of modern fantasy literature (and, coincidentally, gaming), and it's probably covered by one of those two words. No wonder then that they were the two words chosen to title one of the best, longest-running computer role-playing series ever: *Might and Magic*. Through six installments (with a seventh on the way) gamers got to explore, conjure, fight, and talk their way through a variety of fantastical realms. Then last year along came something a bit different, *Heroes of Might and Magic*. Some *Might and Magic* fans were aghast, for while *Heroes* had many RPG elements, it was primarily a (gasp!) strategy game. Hopefully, though, they didn't let that turn them aside, for if they did they missed what many gamers came to know as one of the best gaming experiences of 1995; good enough, in fact, to earn the first *Heroes* several awards, including none other than the *Computer Games Strategy Plus* Turn-Based Strategy Game of the Year award.

The year of the sequel

Fast forward to 1996, the Year of the Sequel. Given the success of the original, it's not at all surprising that New World has chosen to follow it up with *Heroes of Might and Magic II: The Succession Wars*. Unlike other sequels, *Heroes II* will not radically alter the original; rather, this DOS, Windows 95, *and* Macintosh game will build upon the strengths of the original, fleshing it out by smoothing over some bumps in the design and adding some welcome new features.

While only a year has passed in the real world, it is now twenty-five years later in game-land and, as you might expect, war is again upon the land. Lord Ironfist has just died, and the struggle between his sons for the throne has begun. Players will get to choose which side of the conflict to support: Roland the good or Archibald the, er, "not so good." You now get to play as either good or evil, and both interface and gameplay will change to reflect this fact. The scenarios being considered definitely fit in with the fiction; your choices within one scenario may well drastically change the path your campaign follows. Do you betray your lord, thereby gaining a city but losing advantages? A choice early on may mean you'll end up fighting the enemy with either a large force, or with a small force equipped with an "ultimate object," necessitating completely different tactics (and, coincidentally, increasing replay value). Losing a scenario may mean difficult going later on, or it may mean the end of your campaigning (probably the fatal end). In all, there will be approximately 40 campaign scenarios.

A game illuminated by monks?

One of the first things you'll notice about *Heroes II* is its graphics; all graphics have been upgraded, so while the resolutions haven't changed, the detail and care put into the artwork itself makes for an even nicer looking product than the original (it has a slightly darker and more sinister look). The combat and adventuring will be interspersed with plenty of cinematic cut scenes. According to New World, the campaigns will be "interactive" (*i.e.*, not linear), and the between-mission animations will support the varying story pathways of the fantasy world.

The game features new terrain types and many additional monsters and creatures. A variety of new terrain types and elements will be encountered, both as you move about the countryside on the adventure maps, in the character towns, and as you engage in tactical combat. Battle occurs in terrain like swamp lands, lava fields, and graveyards, terrain which may contain new "combat objects" like briar patches, geysers, mausoleums, or yucca plants, to use or avoid as you maneuver your forces. Terrain you'll encounter on the adventure map may be "inactive" (*i.e.*, of no particular effect) or "active;" new

According to New World, the campaigns will be "interactive" ..., and the between-mission animations will support the varying story pathways of the fantasy world.

active adventure terrain elements include farm houses (provides a "wisdom teacher"), watering hole (increases morale), and derelict ships (provides gold and wood through salvage).

With the new character classes (see below) come several new monster types you can either recruit or which you may face in battle. Chief among these are everybody's favorites, the undead: skeletons, zombies, lich, and the bone dragons, to name a few (oddly enough, ghosts don't count as undead). Undead units are unique in that they have no morale (they are always at normal level) and they are immune to mind, curse, and bless spells. Of course, no one likes hanging around with the dead, so if you mix them with other troops on the battlefield the morale of those units will be lowered (so *that's* why the orcs and

trolls always look so glum! I guess I would, too…).

All of the artifacts (some 35 of them) from the original game will be included, and approximately 40 new ones will be added. Artifacts range from the relatively minor (*e.g.*, the "Endless pouch of sulfur" which gives you +1 sulfur per turn) to the major ("Statesman's quill," which give +1 to a hero's diplomacy skill level) to the ultimate ("Golden goose," which will give you +10,000 gold per turn).

To battle!

Combat will be functionally similar to that the first game, but several improvements and additions have been made to increase both the fun and challenge. The combat map is now full screen, with larger dimensions (11 hexes wide by 9 deep), allowing for more maneuver options. Units may have more than one "non-conflicting" (*i.e.*, non-canceling) spell applied to them at one time. For example, a monster that's been frozen with a paralyze will *still* be paralyzed if "blessed" by his master; both spells are active on the monster. To be freed from a negative spell, an appropriate counter-spell must be cast. In the eye-candy department, the battle animations have been improved (now up to 24 frames per monster); animation will now occur across the battlefield, not just with the currently selected creature.

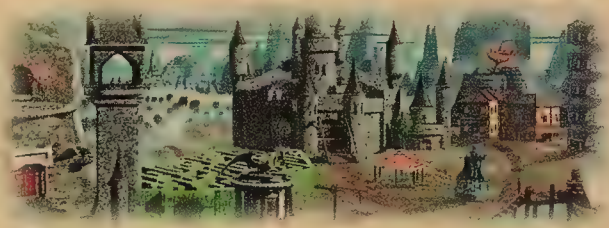
Role-playing roots

The original *Might and Magic* series was primarily a role playing one; *Heroes of Might and Magic*, while containing some RPG elements, was primarily a strategy game. To expand the gaming experience, the folks at New World have pumped up the role-playing aspects of *Heroes II* quite a bit. Two new character classes, Necromancers and Wizards, have been added to the existing four. The number of skills the heroes themselves have has been increased quite a bit; besides the four basic statistics of the original game, heroes will now be able to learn a variety of secondary skills (differing somewhat by hero class and level). Such skills may be given or increased either through a jump in experience level or through some special game event. With a level jump players will be allowed to ramp up a main characteristic (picked from a random list) and be given a chance to select from the secondary skills. Some of the secondary skills being considered for addition to the game are pathfinder, diplomacy, luck, Eagle Eye (hero may learn a spell that an enemy uses against him or her), or necromancy.

The spell casting mechanism has also been reworked. Players will now be able to cast spells based on the level of mana in their pool. Once memorized a spell is never "forgotten" (*i.e.*, used up), but heroes

Heroes are now much more complex people, with secondary skills like diplomacy and necromancy

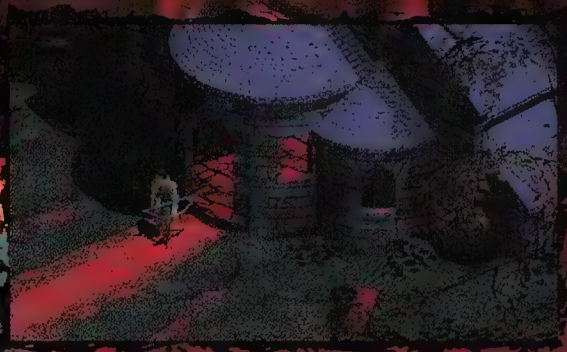
A warlock's town early on....



...and after some buildings have been added

The reworked combat screen

FROM THE MAKERS OF WARCRAFT II: TIDES OF DARKNESS 1995'S GAME



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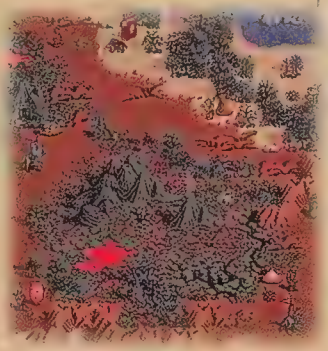
will need to regenerate their spell casting power by returning to a mage guild or some sort of outdoor watering post. This lets players accumulate a powerful repertoire of spells, but keeps them from wiping out a less-magically-powerful enemy rapidly with a few super spells. Heroes may, however, obtain items during their questing which either boost their available mana energy or boost a particular spell. Some spells will be instantaneous, some will last for a round or level of combat, and a few are permanent. You'll have your usual complement of fireballs and lightning blasts, words of power and healing spells for use in combat, and a separate set, useful while adventuring ("dimension door" to teleport you to a visible spot on the map, "forced march" to increase your unit's movement allowance, etc.). In all, *Heroes II* will feature approximately 60 spells for your fun and adventuring pleasure.



The land of the undead

As with the existing character classes, characters of either of the new Wizard or Necromancer classes will be based in a town designed around their character type. As the game progresses, new buildings may be added to a character's town; some of these, like a well (+2 growth for all monsters) or a market place are common to each character class, while others are specific to a town type. "Monster buildings" (*i.e.*, buildings which generate a specific type of monster) have been added for the new classes; a Necromancer may have an Archeological Dig (produces a skeleton), an Egyptian Pyramid (a mummy, of course), or a Mausoleum (a lich), while in a Wizard's town you might find a Hobbit Hole (gets you your classic halfling), a Foundry (golem) or a Cloud Castle (produces a titan).

Other gaming goodies

Not forgotten in the upgrade are the multiplayer aspects of the game; instead of four players, you'll be able to play with up to six people, via hot-seat, modem, network, serial connection, and over the Internet. Much of the down-time that existed in multiplayer games in the original has been eliminated: turn-based players will now be able to enter commands simultaneously; once all players are finished, the entire turn is executed. A very welcome new feature will allow human players to band together against the computer, winning the game when all computer opponents have been defeated (such cooperative gameplay that lets all players win is something that's long been missing from most strategy games, and will be much appreciated).

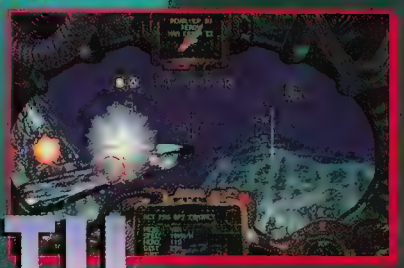
The scenario and world editor introduced in the Windows 95 version will stay much the same, with a few important improvements, especially in the interface. You'll now be able to pick up an object and move it on the map or copy it multiple times (no more select-place-oops-delete-select-place cycle), and you now have the ability to draw in roads and streams.

"To your steeds, men (and ladies)!"

As with the *Might and Magic* universe, the design of a game can at times be an amorphous thing, so take some of the specifics noted above with a grain of salt; while most of the details discussed should make it into the finished game, last minute changes are always possible (indeed, some changes occurred while this article was being written). Nevertheless, strategy gamers and RPGers alike should be ready to mount up and ride out to do battle as good or evil sometime this Winter.

Intense Underwater Action . . . Better Hold Your Breath!

ARCHIMEDEAN DYNASTY



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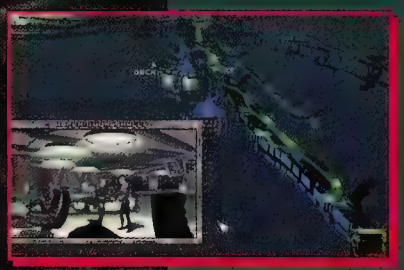

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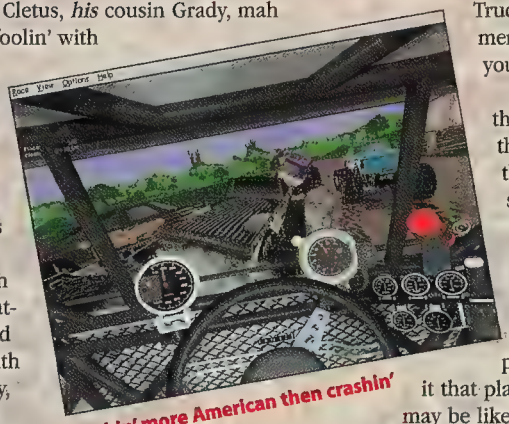
by Revis Jode Bauman

Monster Truck MADNESS

Billy-Bob gets down and dirty

Me and mah cousin Cletus, *his* cousin Grady, mah sister, who been foolin' with Cletus, and my 11 kids was goin' down to the Monster Truck Rally to get drunk an' watch some crashes at the fair-ground the t'other night, when we got to thinkin'. Cletus just buyed one of them new fangled 'puter things, to ride on the infomation freeway, or whatever the hell theys callin' it, and he don't have nothing to do with it. We outta gas on that freeway, or somethin', so an idea struck me, like they usually do when I'm sittin' in a stand full of good old folks, chewin' a chaw.



Nothin' more American then crashin'

We called t'other cousin, the one who's got all that money from cleanin' windows, or something like that. Anyways, ol' Billy-Bob Gates is his name, and his company is called Microsoft, and I says to him, "Billy, you *gots* to put together one of them Monster *Truck* games. If *I'd* buy it, and so would *Cletus*, then the whole *world* gonna want it too."

He studied on it a bit, then he says to me, "Billy-Ray, I figger you on to somethin'. Tell me some more," – or somethin' like that. And on that day, Billy-Bob decides to make *Monster Truck Madness*. I hope he get his first million with this one.

They got plenty o' tracks for ya

He asked me ta 'splain 'bout it. So I says to him, "Billy-Bob, you get some them big-ass trucks, like Bigfoot, and Grave Digger, 'n throw 'em into some tracks with lots o' mud 'n jumps 'n crashes, then they slip 'n slide 'round like greased hogs, 'n then we throw in some commitary by mah good ol' frien' Armey Armstrong – that's Mr. Monster Truck Racing – to call the thing, 'n add drag races, tourmamaments, and a whole *crap*-load o' tracks 'n stuff, and you gots yourself a product."

He starts to cogitate on it (he's *always* thinkin'. You'd think he was a genie-us, or somethin'), 'n says, "What about them thar physics 'n stuff; we gotta make it feel like the real thing." I don't know what in hell he's talkin' 'bout, but I says OK anyways. We got them physics, or whatever they is, and we also throwed in some beer 'n chicks in tight tops, short shorts 'n cowboy boots (made from *real* 'gator skin). He din't know how to get that stuff in the box, so we settled on some fancy scenery, like mah trailer.

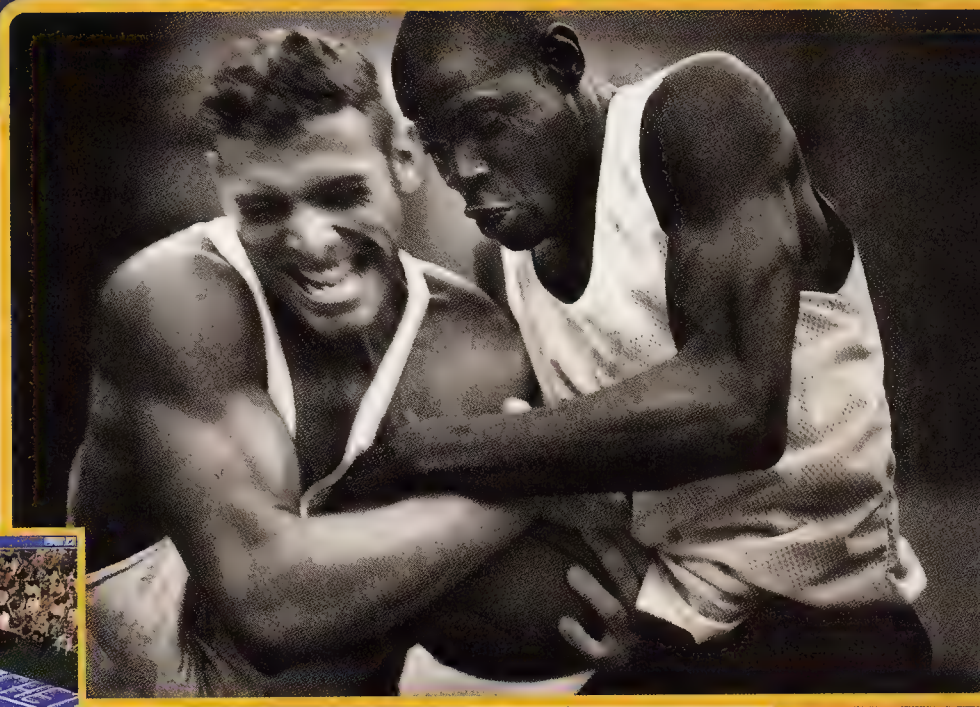
He says it's gotta have great graphics 'n 3D card support, but I don't know what that means. I wanted a radio in it that played Garth Brooks, and *all* mah favorite tunes. I think it may be like that, but he said he may also put some o' that devil-rock satan music in there, too. Bizness, he says.

So I finally gets the game (says 'tis an alphabet version, or somethin' like that. I dunno what it all has to do with letters 'n spelling 'n stuff like that), and it's all I could ask for. I got it delivered to me at the factory, 'n rushed it over to Cletus' trailer (he gots the *best* trailer in the park. He even got cable and an indoor Krapper). We put the little gold thing in his stereo, but it give off an *awful* racket; so we yanked it back out. So we take it to cousin Joe Bob, who got a job at the bank cleanin' 'n stuff. He smart. He got a computer too, an' he cleans windows 95 times, just like Billy-Bob.

Rollin' down the river... yeeehaaawwww!

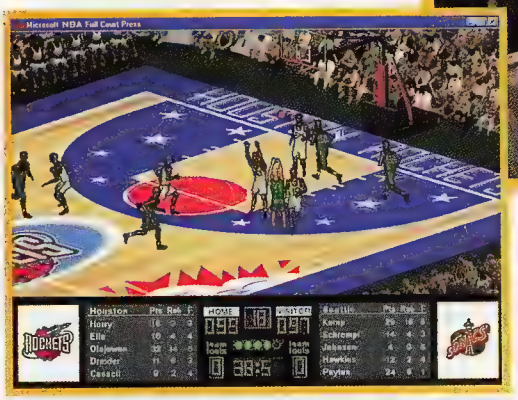
Wally puts it in his machine and we gets to drivin'. It feels *really* fast, and fun. Hits the best thing I never did see on a 'puter. 'Course, it be the only thing I seen on the computer, but...still, the best. If all games 'r this fun, I gotta get me one of them 'puters. Think I'll git to Wal-Mart an' buy me one. Unless Billy-Bob buys me one first, for *inventin'* the game. That'd be only fair. ■

You've always been a tad TOO COMPETITIVE AT HOOPS.



Well, this surely won't help matters any.

Finally, some PC roundball that lets you play just like in the gym. In other words, like a maniac.



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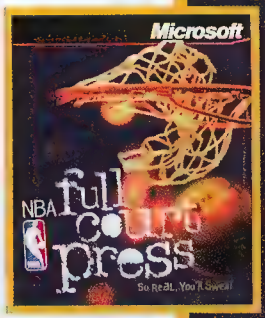

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by Scott Udell

Fragile Allegiance

On the edge in deep space

You're out on the edge, in the Fragmented Sectors. Your home is a a hunk of rock, an asteroid with barely enough gravity to hold down its own dust. Breathing down your neck are your corporate overlords, politically flexible and ever greedy; snapping at your ankles are the workers you must provide for. Your administrators have their own agendas, production is off, equipment is breaking down, and a combined alien fleet has just arrived in orbit, mad over your 'appropriation' of a nearby asteroid. Welcome to the world of *Fragile Allegiance*, Interplay's upcoming real-time strategy game.

Fragile Allegiance is not your average space empire strategy game. Instead of being lord of all you see (or at least everything your race controls), your position is more akin to that of the leader of an early European colony out to find riches for the home country in the New World. You work for Tetracorp, a huge conglomerate, and it's your job to bring in the mineral riches of the vast fields of asteroids spread throughout the uncharted wilderness of the Fragmented Sectors. You will have to lay claim to asteroids as quickly as possible, building up the facilities to support your mining operations, keep your workers alive and happy, and defend against threats from one of the six alien races inhabiting your sector.

Another thing differentiating *Fragile Allegiance* from other games of this type is the fact that it's real-time, which means the galaxy isn't going to sit still for you (although never fear; in the alpha we've seen the game does pause–at least in single player mode–when you go into the various options menus, so you won't have to worry about an attack while you're deciding whether to build another housing unit or a solar collector). Realizing that gamers approach their real-time gaming in different ways, Interplay plans to give you plenty of options in this regard. You prefer just the combat aspects? Fine! Just turn over operations of your colony mines to the computer controlled Colony Supervisors, but be careful; these folks have different personalities and may run you into the ground if you either treat them poorly or don't keep an eye on them. On the other hand, if you want to dive into the detail micromanagement of your asteroid minds, that's cool too; you can leave "things like ship combat and other 'action elements' to computer control."

If you choose the micro-management route, you'll have plenty to do. Some facilities can be built by your workers on-site; others have to be ordered in from Corporate HQ. As the game progresses newer technologies will become available, allowing you to equip your colonies with all kinds of exotic toys. As your colonial mining empire grows you'll get to interact more and more often with the six alien species; depending on the tone of the game, your actions, and the cultures of the various races this interaction could be benevolent or not; while peaceful negotiations may be attractive, spying, sabotage, and outright warfare may be called for. Of course, while you're dealing with the other races, you'll have to contend with problems in your own house; the workers might strike, Corporate might be balking at sending you the latest goods, etc. On top of all this are the ever-present, over-arching dangers of space itself; radiation storms, meteor strikes, and a fragile life-support infrastructure are all things you'll have to contend with.

If you choose the more combat-oriented approach you'll also have plenty to do. First, make sure you've seen to your colonies' defenses through the huge variety of on-rock weapons installations that will come available. Next, build up your combat fleet (at first you'll have to order ships in from Corporate, but it appears that one building is a shipyard so hopefully you'll be able to start to supply yourself), keeping it armed with the newest and best guns and shields…

> ...if you want to dive into the detail micro-management of your asteroid minds...

unless, of course, you or your administrators need the funds for a new air purifier, in which case you'll have to make due. If you're particularly daring (something you'll probably have to become to satisfy Corporate's never-ending greed), you'll have to use your military arm to assault and take over the facilities of alien enemy's (or even friends, if you're willing to risk peace for the bottom line).

In a year where quite a few space-strategy games have been announced (and a few might even be released), Interplay is hoping to distance themselves from the pack with *Fragile Allegiance*. Quite a few gameplay elements will, if implemented as planned, go a long way towards achieving this goal. ●

Below left to right: Asteroids are your homes, bases, and businesses in the Fragmented Sectors; New technologies will play an important part in setting up your colonial-mining empire; A variety of offensive/defensive equipment is available for the militarily-inclined; Sitting still is not the way to do business; expanding your mining base will be an important part of staying alive and satisfying the bottom line

ASSUME THE ROLE OF JACK BUTCHER, AND THERE WILL BE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WANT YOU...DEAD.

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(EXCEPT MAYBE YOU)

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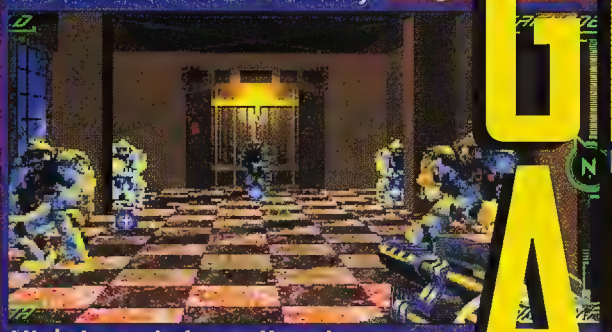
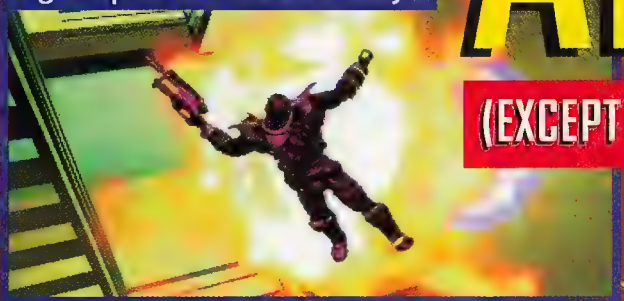


High-impact cinematic cut aways.



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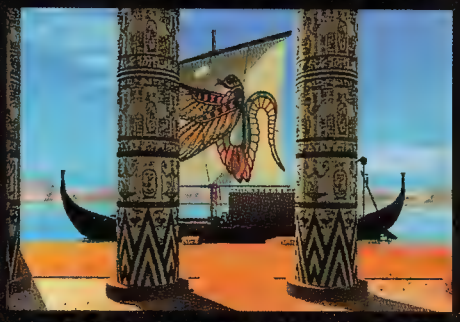

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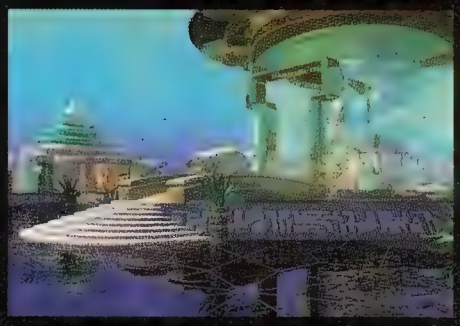

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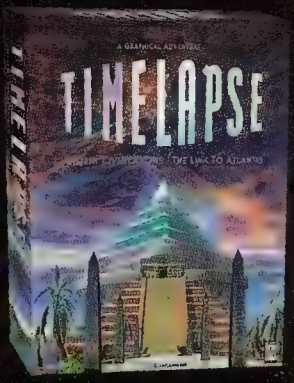

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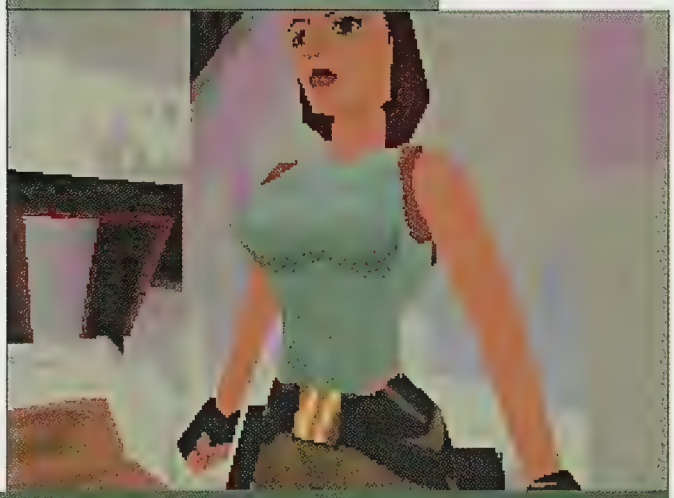


Tomb Raider

Big, bad and beautiful

by Steve Bauman

She's big and she's bad. She's in possession of the biggest pair of... guns seen in gaming. Her credit cards are maxed out and she's got a serious case of PMS (Cut! Go to commercial!)

She's... Barb Wire. No, Barb's a wimp, baby. This is Lara Croft, star of Eidos' upcoming action/adventure, *Tomb Raider*. Lara is quite the athlete. She runs. She jumps. She runs and jumps. She fires her guns in mid-air. She does back-flips. She does side-flips. She flips-out. She swims (using, and we're not joking, a variation of the breaststroke). A threadbare plot finds our hero on a quest to find a legendary artifact called "The Scion," and her little jaunt will find her knee deep in the Incan ruins in Peru and the Egyptian pyramids.

This "plot" merely serves as an excuse for the developer, Core Design, to showcase a seriously good 3D engine. In this early stage of development, its rendering speed is excellent, though you occasionally walk through objects, and see through walls. This will all likely be fixed before release, and if anything, the engine will get even faster, allowing high-resolution modes on non-3D accelerated machines (a version is planned for the 3DFX 3D chipset).

The character of Lara has over 2000 frames of SGI-rendered polygon animation; all the characters in the game are polygonal as well. The animation (and 3D engine overall), even in this early version of the software, is wonderful, with a fluidity superior to *Quake*'s.

A camera tracks Lara and manages to show the right view most of the time (again, this will likely be tweaked). If you can't see the action the way you'd like, you can hold down a key and look around in any direction (this is necessary if you want to look into a hole in a ceiling or down into a pool of water – look before you leap, there's crocodiles in them there ponds).

The game will include four worlds and with 12 total levels, with the usual FMV sequences tying all of the levels together. Present in the current version of the software are four levels, all full of puzzles and things to kill. In its current form, there isn't *too* much in the way of killing, and it's mostly directed at the more aggressive members of the animal

A camera tracks Lara and manages to show the right view most of the time...

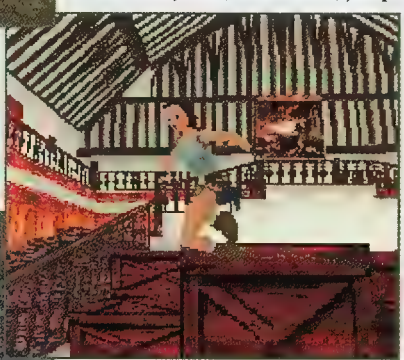
kingdom, but more bad guys are planned. The puzzles, though, consist of the usual "find key to open door" variety as well as a number of "move object B, climb on it, jump to ledge A" type of platform-game inspired puzzles. Overall, this is the kind of variety that most first-person action games lack.

This game – along with perhaps its inspiration *Fade to Black* – shows off the strength of a third-person viewpoint. Lara can fire right or left while running forward, something that would be tougher to pull off with a first-person viewpoint. Thankfully, the game has auto-targeting, as this is the third-person view's main weakness. You can negotiate the complex climbing and jumping maneuvers that are required relatively easily (which is really par for the course for a game taking place in ancient pyramids and ruins – watch out, there's a trap... there are some snakes... watch out for that bat – you know the script).

With plenty of variations beyond the standard "kill everything in sight" gameplay, *Tomb Raider*, even in this early stage of development, looks like it has H.I.T. written all over it. It looks like it will stand out, and maybe even stand above, many of the other action games this holiday season. Besides, if you don't think it will, Lara will come to your house and kick your ass. ■

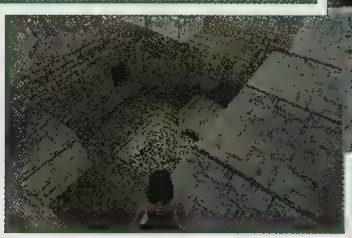
▲ Just let that Duke Nukem guy try this maneuver

▶ Lara jumps for joy over another magazine article



▲ Lara gets eaten by a lion

Look down and jump for the pool of water ▼



▲ Lara obviously bought the "10 minute buns" video

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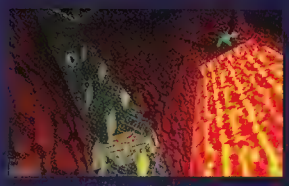

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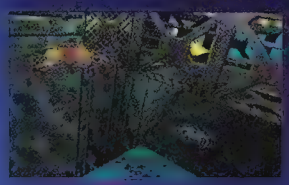
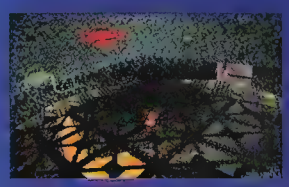


"The sequel of the year"
Computer Game Review



"5 out of 5 Stars!"
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Descent II Developed by Parallax Software

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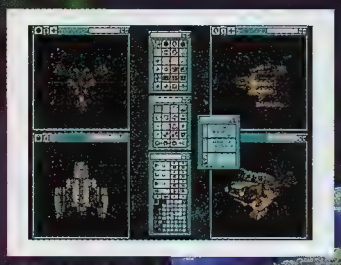
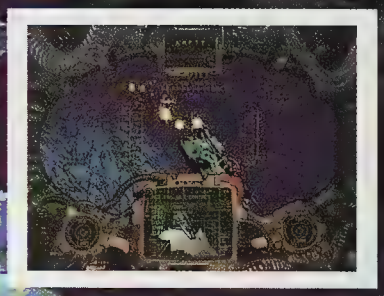
by Steve Wartofsky



The game includes a fantastic, massively detailed mission editor



Underwater explosions should look different in a simulation—and here... they do

The subs come with a full, sophisticated complement of instruments and weapons systems

Archimedean Dynasty

Blue Byte plunges into the briny deep

To be good, an underwater simulation has to offer something other than either an air combat simulation (with which it shares some features) or a space combat simulation (with which it shares many more features). In the end, the particularities of an underwater environment need to be taken into account to make underwater simulation really work.

So far, most games along such lines – with the exception of historical submarine sims – have given pretty short shrift to any efforts to go into detail simulating realistic underwater environments. *Subwar 2050* from MicroProse did a pretty good job a few years back, but it was really more of an action game than anything else.

While *Archimedean Dynasty* certainly has the look and feel of a more substantial simulation, its main goal is still to be an action game, with (at this point seemingly endless, we'll see how it pans out in a more complete version) story elements and interesting variations on the usual combat scenarios. Despite this fact, though, enough of the reality of the underwater environment – in the form of currents, various kinds of underwater geological and topological features, the physics of moving through water – are represented to give the game a truly distinctive feel, as the player maneuvers his or her way through the 60 or so combat missions presented as the means to progress towards the end of an elaborate story line. Nothing else seen recently plays like this game, and the detailing is often phenomenal.

The game looks to be taking on a number of different technical and game design issues ambitiously, with top-notch graphics (use of hi-color modes are possible, giving the dark, underwater graphics a truly luminous feel), challenging and effective computer AI for opponents, extensive use of video and rendered cut scenes for the adventure/story/dialogue elements, and of course solid 3D control and simulation-style representation of underwater combat (complete with *Wing Commander*-style underwater taunts and retorts during combat). A full-fledged mission editor is included as well, which should provide *AD* fans extensive opportunities to build, trade and share missions.

Whether or not all the pieces will fit together into a game which is actually fun to play is still too early to tell, though; with the material on-hand, the story/adventure elements don't yet seem compelling enough for the typical simulation fan to want to wade through to get to the actual 3D combat (there is, of course, a "quick action" mode for the impatient to dig right into). The combat itself is dark – as befits the underwater environment – and certainly appropriately atmospheric, for the situation represented; if you like the brooding, spooky pace of sub warfare simulation, this is definitely the business. If you're used to air combat (or racing simulation), the pace may be too slow. More importantly, though, the current layout of controls for 3D play are un-intuitive enough – given the implicit standardization of keystrokes occurring these days across the board for simulation (and even action) games – to be obtrusive for people first starting the game, expecting simple things like using the "+" key to accelerate and the "b" key to brake. We can only hope the final version will allow remapping of keystrokes to whatever the player desires, again, a common enough feature among current and upcoming simulations.

Certainly *Archimedean Dynasty* is giving this kind of scenario its best shot, in any event; obviously an all-out effort is being made to provide players a full suite of weapons and instrumentation, and the story elements seem gauged to give the player an epic experience to work through. The game has the potential of being truly massive in scope – a gameworld you can essentially live in for hours at a time. Let's hope the final results pull the whole project into focus, in a way which will do merit to the extensive effort which has obviously been put into this product so far.

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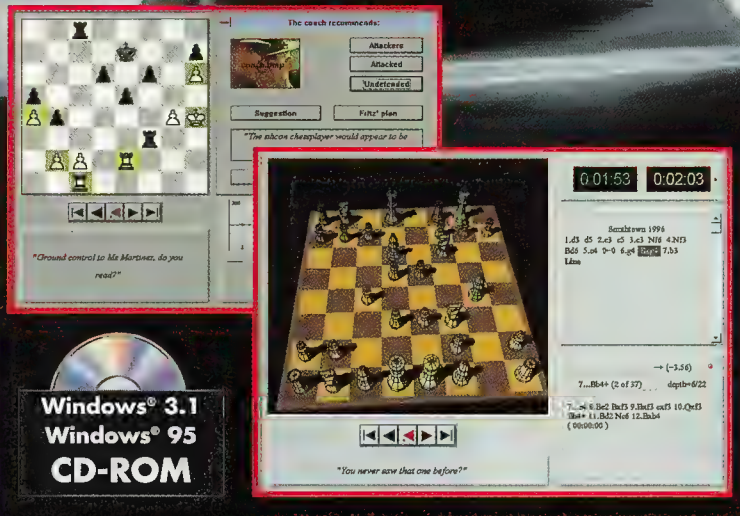

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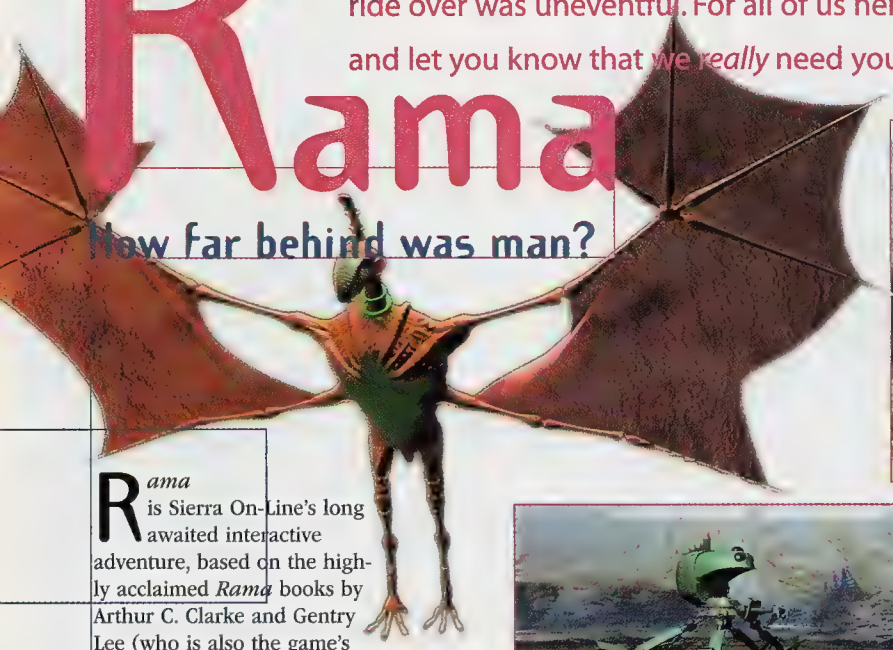
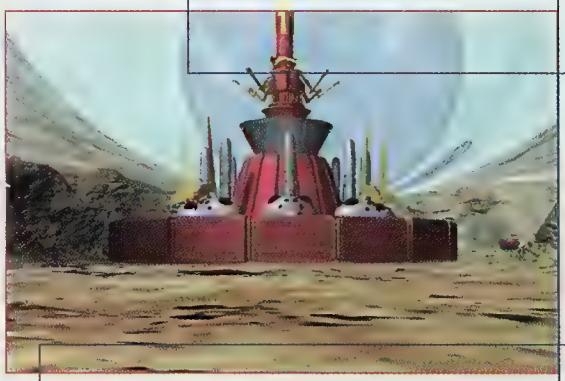
by Cindy Yans

Rama

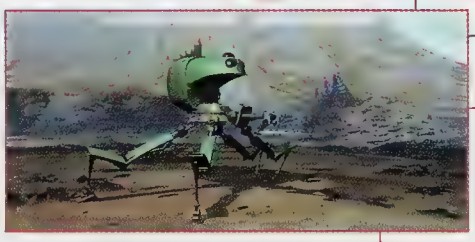
How far behind was man?

"Hi! Bonjour, I am Nicole des Jardins, the medical officer. I hope that your shuttle ride over was uneventful. For all of us here, I would like to welcome you to Rama and let you know that we *really* need your help." Thus begin several journeys.





▲ The skyline of the vast Central Plains of Rama



◀ The spider-bot must have donated half of his legs to science

Rama is Sierra On-Line's long awaited interactive adventure, based on the highly acclaimed *Rama* books by Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee (who is also the game's chief designer). Set a few years in the future (assuming that two hundred is just a few in the infinite space-time continuum), the game will place the player in the role of a replacement astronaut joining a crew assigned to rendezvous with a giant, enigmatic starship which has suddenly arrived in the Earth's solar system from...somewhere else. The mission directive is to explore this vast cylinder, and ascertain its origin and purpose. We can assume that it is *not* here to market sporting goods or health and beauty aids.

The player will interact with the other eleven astronauts, many of whom have specialized assignments in the areas of news reporting, military intelligence and exobiology, and with several species of alien (avians and octospiders) while exploring the Central Plains (the floor of RAMA), which turns out to be the size of a large country. The Central Plains is broken into two symmetric segments, bisected by a frozen Cylindrical Sea extending completely around the floor. The structures here are filled with conundrums and puzzles, all designed to preserve the ultimate mystery of Rama.

> The structures here are filled with conundrums and puzzles, all designed to preserve the ultimate mystery of Rama.

Richard Wakefield, the chief technical engineer and bottle washer on the project, is not simply a techie. His *job* is to know the function and operation of every piece of equipment in the place, but his *passion*, it seems, is Shakespeare. Raised in Stratford-on-Somewhere, his avocation is creating little nine-inch Shakespearean characters which populate a growing menagerie. One of his favorites is Falstaff, and, as the story goes (switching to real-life here), one of the "software nerds" in the development area saw him for the first time. Discretion, in this case, *not* being the better part of valor, the fellow says, "Hey! What is that FAT guy doing in there?"

Wakefield gives the player Puck ("...what fools these mortals be"), who is actually the game's hint system in disguise. He lives in your backpack, but if you're particularly stuck in some situation, you simply whisk him out, point him and click him until he offers the hint you need. Game designer Gentry Lee believes that having to go through inventory access to acquire a hint will deter many hint-addicts from OD-ing. This is a fascinating and original attempt to bring to life one of the most endearing story elements in the early part of the *Rama* series.

There are places in the game where the player cannot achieve something alone, but must deploy one of the small robot characters to assist. Readers of the series will particularly enjoy this aspect of the design.

Rama is being designed as interactive literature, with a careful balance between storytelling and gameplay. Designer Gentry Lee tells us that he is not a one man show, however. He believes that any designer is only as good as his Director and Art Director, and that the team he was stuck wi..., er, privileged to call colleagues is no less than the best. Director Mark Hood, a staple at Sierra, and Richard Hescox, Art Director, are still working closely with Lee (cushioning the programmers from him as necessary) to create a cohesive and compelling multimedia experience that will be very true to the original story in *Rama II*.

Certain compromises have been made to the story, as is usual during inter-media translation, but one thing about which Lee and the team were very careful was to preserve the philosophical center of the work at all costs. Earlier stated was the fact that at the outset, several journeys were beginning; the obvious one bringing the player to the core of the starship in a gaming quest with exploration and puzzles to solve. Less obvious is the one which brings the player to the center of the reality which defines the human condition; inviting him to experience a "gradual epiphany," if you will, that somewhere in the hierarchy of the universe we may not be near the top. Does there exist a morality on a higher level than ours? And if so, how do we meet that realization?

Lee is confident that his story will transcend the boundaries of literature to provide an enjoyable and perhaps cathartic experience. He hopes that this game is not limited to the (affectionately-termed) "computer nerd" crowd..."It doesn't belong to them," says Lee, "It belongs to *all* of us."

▶ Gentry Lee, Arthur C. Clarke and child

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by Steve Bauman

NASCAR Racing 2

The evolution of a simulation

When you've already created a sophisticated simulation, what do you do next? Papyrus' *NASCAR Racing* was already cutting edge, both in the visuals and in the modeling of a stock car, when it was released. Machines haven't developed fast enough to make a quantum leap in graphics, so what can *NASCAR Racing 2* possibly offer?

How about an easier game for beginners? A better interface? More realism? Improved details? That, in a nutshell, is what *NASCAR Racing 2*, now handled by Papyrus' new owners Sierra, offers the gamer.

The learning curve for both *IndyCar Racing* and *NASCAR Racing* has been too steep for all but the most devoted and/or patient drivers. There is no doubt a large majority of gamers out there who'd love to just sit down and race, and who aren't willing to devote their entire life to a game. *NASCAR 2* adds a lot of things to welcome newbies into the fold, all done without compromising the game's core realism. In addition to the previous game's auto-braking, there's a new and improved steering help and a spin-correction feature which will almost always keep your nose pointed in the direction you need to go. Purists may scoff at some of these additions, but they're necessary to help users learn the game, and they do nothing to diminish the simulation (face it, they should have been there from day one).

▲ The paint kit will now be accessible from the game, and now the interface actually makes sense

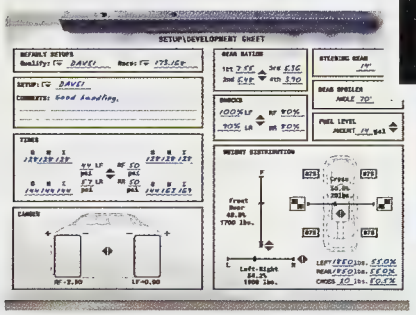
◀ Each driver now gets a picture - that's a car model from the game

▼ A single menu allows you to access all of the functions of a race weekend. This screen also comes up when you pause a race - your car will show all damage accumulated during the race

The interface has been streamlined as well. Your immediate reaction to firing the game up is, "Papyrus has finally realized that PC owners have a mouse." Yes, the game has an all-new shell interface, which takes much of the drudgery out of setup and configuration. Most options can be set from a single menu, with the pit stop interface receiving the most obvious work. Gamers who liked the flashy, swooping 3D camera of the original *NASCAR* may be disappointed, but purists will like the added realism of the setup sheet. In fact, Papyrus visited Bobby Allison's garage in North Carolina and were able to see how the actual teams create setups. In general, car setup is somewhat simpler now, because of NASCAR mandated rules regarding fuel load, and Goodyear's mandate on stagger.

▲ The scenic Sears Point track - where drivers actually have to turn right

◀ It may not be as flashy, but this setup screen is more realistic and less cumbersome to use

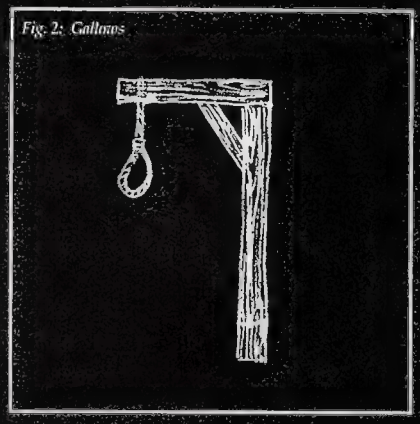


Once you're behind the wheel, you'll notice that the sky is more detailed and that the cars look considerably better, a combination of a few more polygons and better texture-mapping. The tracks are as up to date as possible, and Papyrus has a full-time person working on getting all of the licensing rights to every billboard and advertiser. Finally, Papyrus has finally added curbing on the road courses. While it's not as sophisticated as *Grand Prix II*'s, it's still a welcome addition.

Apparently, stock car drivers do not look right and left while driving (neither would you if you were going 200 MPH and had to turn). Teams use spotters to inform drivers of their positions on the track, and *NASCAR 2* adds this feature. You'll hear things like "Clear right," meaning you can drift to the right. You'll also be updated on your position and warned of any upcoming troubles ("Accident in turn four, race to the yellow"). Because this chatter could get a bit annoying, Papyrus has a number of filters to allow the player to only hear what they want to hear.

Finally, multiplayer play has moved beyond modem-to-modem play. There's support for up to eight players over an IPX network, though Kali players will likely be disappointed that latency issues will likely keep *NASCAR 2* off of the Internet (for now).

Overall, Papyrus has listened to the changes gamers asked for in updating what is already a formidable simulation. Even in a year which has already seen the amazing *Grand Prix II*, these additions could put *NASCAR Racing 2* in the front of the pack. ■



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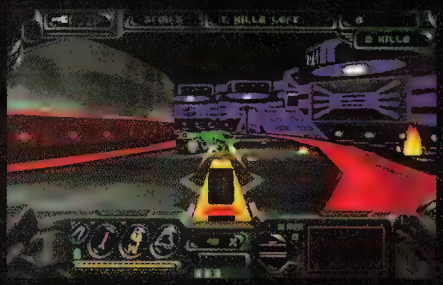

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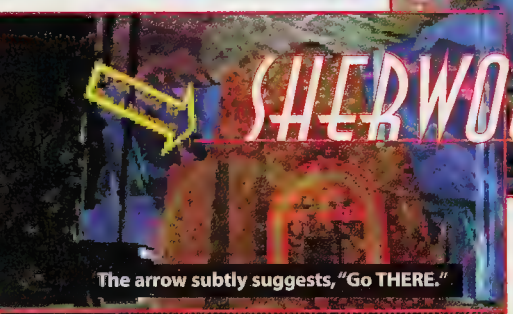
Delirium

by Cindy Yans

Sherwood Forest Wireheads Unite



The arrow subtly suggests, "Go THERE."

The lure of progressive poker machines

There can be only one god-animal of the virtual universe. What two animals have built, only one can retain. Why can no one share the power, rule together, cooperate? Because the animal in question is Man.

It is 2058 in SamCity. Two young business executives, Philip Smith and Malcolm Kruz, have created the Vortex, a giant cyber-network which contains all of the world's businesses and entertainment centers. But unlike its competitors, the Vortex is not your everyday, run-of-the-mill cyberworld. It is much more. Philip Smith has created new technology enabling whoever controls the Vortex to control the thoughts and ultimately the actions of all connected – a god-tool.

Malcolm, in his Man-like way, knows that only one can rule. He has known long before the completion of the Vortex project. The night before the establishment of the network, Malcolm kills his partner. But before he dies, Philip is able to download his consciousness into the Vortex, thus preserving his being (*Lawnmower Man*, anyone?).

Dedicated to the maintenance of proper villain etiquette, Malcolm lies to the world, saying that Philip was electrocuted in a lab accident (lightning flew through his monitor, perhaps?) and complacently takes over the company. And on the seventh day, he rested.

Interplay presents *Delirium*, a cyberpunk thriller where virtual reality is the consummate reality. The promotional video proclaims, "After the ultimate corporate takeover, society has fallen into darkness, and the digital world has become a realm of slavery. From the ruins of mankind, there emerges... an *unlikely* hero." What words have you, oh hero of tomorrow? "Bite me. This job sucks."

Our hero goes by the valiant-sounding name of...Roger. Eight years after Philip's untimely death, we find that he had a headstrong son named Roger, who has been off at war. Upon his return, he accepts a job at Kruz corporation, where Malcolm (who happens to be his godfather) has been reigning since the unfortunate "accident." His job is to evaluate *Terrorware,* a form of "entertainment" where people can experience horrible deaths in cyberspace without actually dying (*Groundhog Day*, anyone?). *Terrorware*, eh? Hmmm, given the circumstances, "Bite me" seems to be a somewhat mild reaction.

The first day on the job, Roger encounters a friendly female intelligence who goes by the name of KAIRA (Kruz Artificial Intelligence Research Assistant). She is assigned to Roger to help him evaluate software. Although in essence she is nothing more than logic circuits, her greatest wish is to become a real live boy, er woman...and Jiminy Cricket is nowhere to be found. Roger downloads her to his cyberdeck and promptly falls in love with her. Still on day one of *Terrorware* evaluation, Roger learns that his father has been murdered and that his mind is being kept prisoner in cyberspace. Horrified that Roger has come upon this information, his boss, Mr. Watt (with the sense of humor of a rock) and Ms. MacPherson (whose demeanor is as warm as ice, but whose appearance can set anyone on fire) dismiss him, and cast him into the streets without his cyberdeck.

Delirium challenges the player to assist Roger in recovering his cyberdeck, finding his father and claiming his birthright. Traveling through the guts of cyberspace, swimming in seas of information is the father he had long forgotten. Now is the time to find him because he is, after all, rich...and big bucks are really what Roger is after. In fact, he accepted the job at Kruz in hopes of locating the old man's hidden bank accounts – no pretentious sentimentality here, eh?

In his quest, Roger knows he must become a powerful force in the Vortex, and turns into the Robin Hood of cyberspace. He finds himself sneaking, hacking and breaking into the databases of the Vortex. The defenses of places like the casino, the stock exchange, banks, military databases, invisible databases and even the hideouts of other hackers eventually prove no match for Roger's ability. Encountering characters such as Johnny Cupcake (with a sine-wave of icing atop his head), Tukk (no friar here, but a muscle bound owner of a SamCity greasy spoon) and Dune, leader of the Merry Men (a group of underground hackers), the player will follow Roger toward the ultimate conflict.

The game will also offer optional cybersexual encounters. Hey, but Robin and the Merry Men never had this opportunity...wonder if they knew what they were missing? ■

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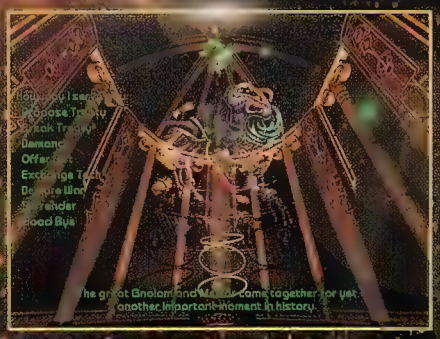

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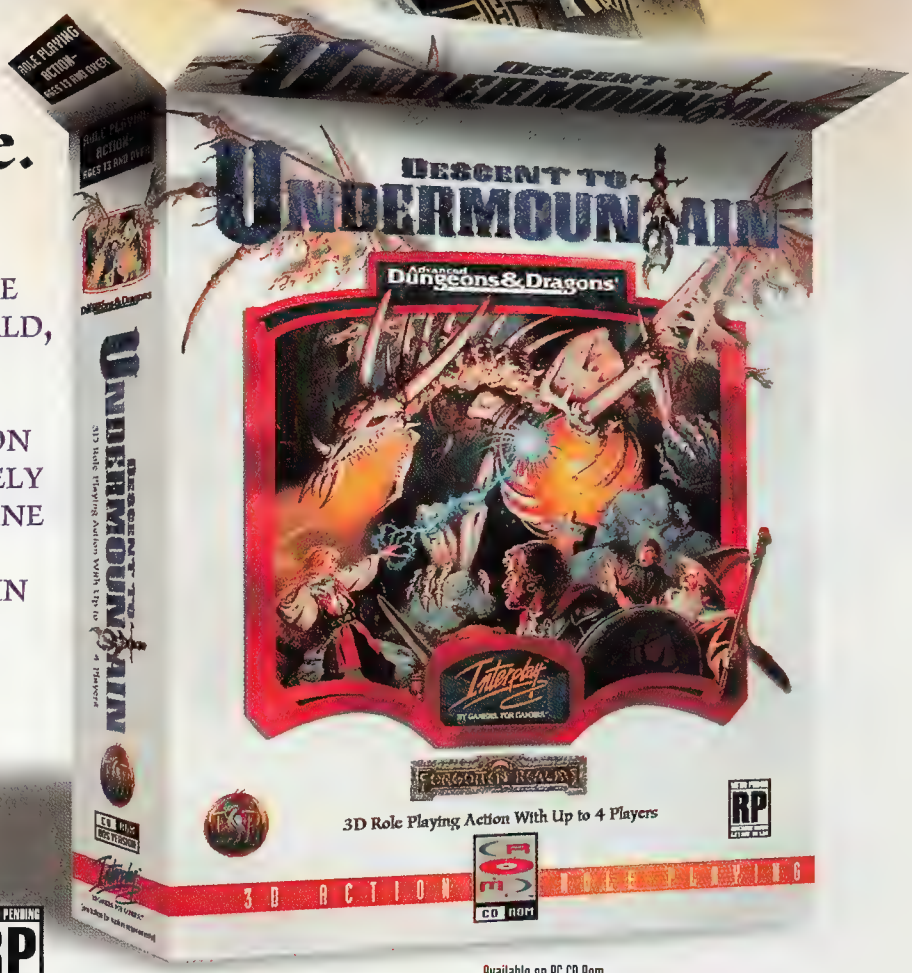

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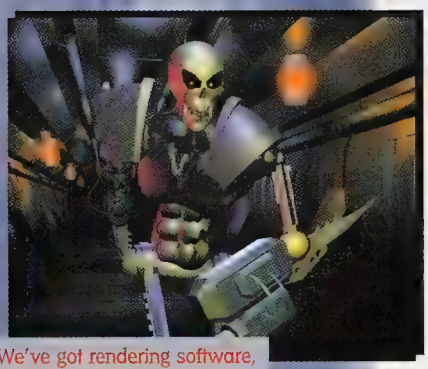
by Steve Bauman

XS Not another Doom clone

Artificial intelligence is the most important part of any game and, in most 3D games, it usually receives the least amount of attention. Creatures just mindlessly attack you when you enter a room, never leaving, even if you're blowing things up next door. Wouldn't it be nice if the inhabitants chased you and, ahem, "preyed" on you, effectively mimicking a multi-player game without forcing the player to go online?



We've got rendering software, and we're gonna use it

If you said yes, then you may want to keep an eye out for SCi's upcoming action game *XS*. Unlike most *Doom*-style shooters, the structure of *XS* is modeled after fighting games. The player starts a game by selecting a bunch of fighters to do battle with. Each fighter is ranked; aby defeating them, the player will increase his or her own rank. A "kill card" records all of your kills and your ranking, and it's portable, so you can take it over to a friend's house and play your character on his or her system.

Note the cool trail of bullets from your gun - who cleans the mess?

If you're worried about not having enough bad guys to slaughter, *XS* gives you 60, count 'em, 60 unique fighters to do battle with. These psychological, medical and mechanical profile, which will give you hints about what weapons they may favor and how their AI works. While it would be impossible to make any evaluative assessment of the AI based on the limited time spent with the game at SCI's offices in England, it's clear that the bad guys operate on their own agendas. If you hide, you can hear the carnage going on around you, and observing the other fighters show some who attack aggressively and others that hit and run.

Up close and personal with Mr. Polygon-for-a-Head

Some fighters do better in certain arenas; it will be up to the player to determine, based on their AI profile, what arena would expose their weaknesses and mask their strengths. There are 20 different arenas, each having its own motif, and each optimized for sniping and full of traps. Some of the areas have objects which can be interacted with, and the levels are large enough to allow players to run off and hide (wimps only need apply). Each arena is also full of moderately armed drones that, when destroyed, yield ammo and power-ups. Additional weapons can be picked up from fallen fighters (and once you exit an arena with a weapon, it becomes available for you to use in any subsequent fights).

The weapon selection is quite varied, and should provide plenty of strategies. There are pistols, shotguns (of course), chain guns (where shells come flying out of the gun – an incredibly cool effect), heat-seeking missiles and radiation bombs. Fragmentation grenades explode into a bunch of smaller grenades, doing enormous damage over a great range (don't even think about throwing these puppies in a small room – you'll take a large amount of damage yourself). For defensive fighters, you'll be able to place spy cameras in the arena and you'll be able to set your own traps.

The 3D engine is your typical post-*Doom* engine, with multi-layered levels (great for sniping people a level or two below). The engine appeared to be quite fast in low-resolution resolutions (a high-resolution version is planned as well) You can look in all directions as well (easily, with the mouse interface). Like more and more modern 3D games, all of the characters are texture-mapped polygons (yup, just like *Quake*). The animation is all motion captured, and looks quite smooth.

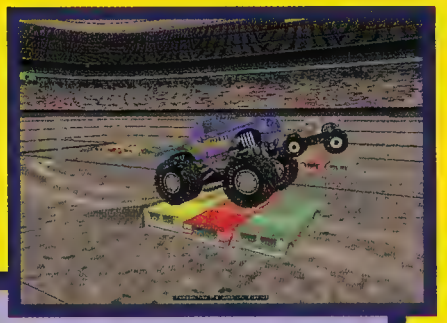
If you're worried about not having enough bad guys to slaughter, *XS* gives you 60, count 'em, 60 unique fighters to do battle with.

Network play is, of course, planned, with the game supporting up to four players over a LAN via IPX (though it hasn't been tested yet, Kali support is expected). One interesting feature is a "take over" button, whereby the computer will take over the your character so you can either watch, answer the phone, go to the bathroom or go out on a date.

Overall, *XS* has serious potential for taking the 3D genre into a new and more interesting area, one where AI and solo-play takes precedence over pure technology and reliance on network play for challenge. Assuming the AI works as advertised, *XS* may have a fighting chance at standing out this holiday season. ■

Bring me the head of the guy in the other room

Size matters.



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PREVIEW

Interstate '76
Activision resurrects the age of muscle and soul

by Steve Wartofsky

1976: the year of the Bi-Centennial (were you there? I was, in Philadelphia – pity me). Disco was hot; so were muscle cars. Soul was, well, really Soul. Hair was big, for both boys and girls. Springsteen was a fresh kid from Jersey. Oil was scarce, and tempers were high; xenophobia was at an all-time peak in the good ol' USA. It was a time to remember (sort of).

What would you do if you wanted to make a game trying to play off the best of the '70's? I mean, it's a time most people scoff at these days. Well, think *Mad Max* and *Road Warrior* (not '70s movies per se, but they certainly cashed in on oil-depletion paranoia) – big, ugly (beautiful), oily machines; now, think *Starsky and Hutch* – lots of hot car chase. Then add some real soul music, played by a band who's kept the spirit alive these past twenty years, and you've got a project which is nothing if not original (for a computer game, at least).

Make no mistake; *Interstate '76* isn't simply some sort of weird *Full Throttle* in wide bells and big sideburns. While it does make use of character interaction (and offers some truly original and sensitive characterization and narrative), the game is, simply put, a full-scale auto combat simulation.

What, you say. Why? The answer's obvious: there's a big gaping hole between the environment of a *Mechwarrior II* and the environment of any solid air combat simulation. The former features relatively empty treks across open spaces, punctuated by incredibly intense, packed firefights in small areas in between; the latter offers long, relatively featureless flying, interrupted by periodic bouts of intense, close-in combat in a relatively small area of sky. Why not put together a simulation which will stretch out across wide expanses (in this case, the American desert Southwest), yet offer challenges, goals and interest all along the way, with a solid story to pull the whole thing together? Et voilà – car combat sim. Play one of 25 vehicles available in the game across a series of 25 scenarios, and remember: you get to choose Muscle Cars, cars with spirit, style, class, actual aesthetic design (hey, they performed like crap and broke down frequently, but they were fun to look at and boy did they lean when you'd take a curve over 35MPH!).

Groove Champion, your in-game character

Stretch out in a Continental

Muscle Car with Radar, and we don't mean from MASH

From a simulation perspective the physics of the game in the software previewed look quite sophisticated, actually – cars swerve in turns, you can execute stunt-style spin maneuvers, braking and acceleration offer a real sense of inertia (unlike most current racing sims) – and, combined with full-scale 3D terrain, make the driving part the most fun I've had with a computer game in a long time (more of this kind of thing, please!). The combat features a fantastic (and fantasy) panoply of weapons options any first-person 3D shooter fan would die for. Thank god the 70's were really never like this, but then again that's what computer gaming's all about, eh?

Most interestingly from a simulation perspective is that current plans are to release a *full-scale terrain and mission* editor with the game, giving you access to *all* the details of the engine. I've never seen a build system as sophisticated and extensive as this one. Terrain, objects, roads, car physics can all be designed literally from the ground up; you'll have the chance to put together (and share across internet, via very efficient small files) any conceivable scenario you'd like. Multiplayer – with 8 players across a LAN and up to 16 perhaps – should benefit from this capability as well.

That kind of design system detail complements a game which also digs deep into detail during play. Some of the night scenes across the desert are particularly breathtaking – watch as your car's headlights suddenly illuminate a building you're only a few hundred feet away from and hurtling towards broadside at 75MPH. Keep an eye on your rear view mirrors and notice the flash of an opponent's headlights off in the distance, then see if you can maneuver through the hills to get behind him quickly enough to take him out before he sees your light in his eyes.

Did you have fun with *Mechwarrior II*? You ain't seen nuthin' yet. Keep yer eyes peeled on the interstate; you never know what the guy behind you's packing.

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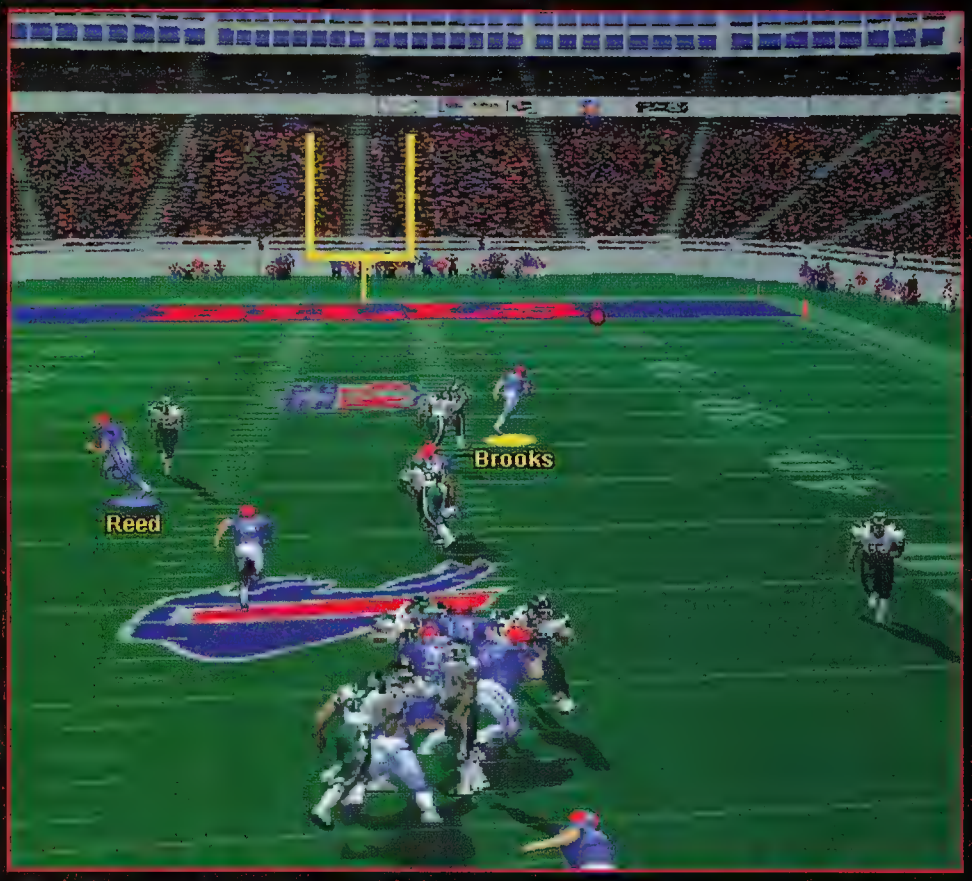

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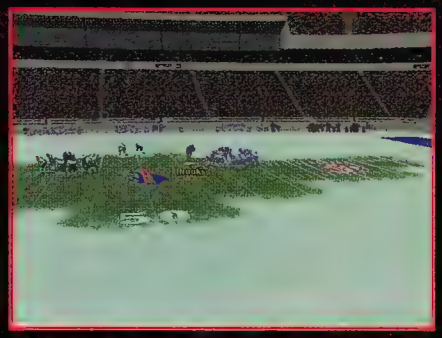

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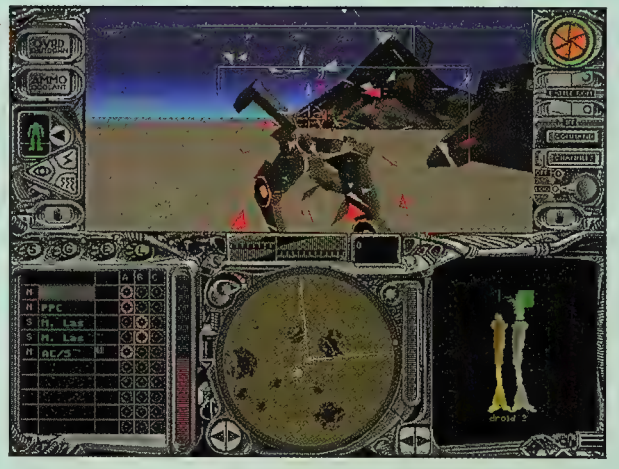
BattleTech: Solaris

it's a small world, after all



The fast and good-looking combat is reminiscent of MechWarrior 2

The Kesmai Corporation has a long history of producing quality on-line games, most notably *Air Warrior*, *Island of Kesmai* and *MultiPlayer BattleTech*. This last title, which takes place in the same Mech-dominated universe as *MechWarrior2*, has recently received a major overhaul. The original *MultiPlayer BattleTech* had vast potential which was never fully realized; Kesmai hopes to make good on the promise of the original with their new game of Mech combat, *Multiplayer BattleTech: Solaris*.

The original *MultiPlayer BattleTech* was modeled upon Activision's original *MechWarrior*. This game allowed players to traverse the vast universe of the Inner Sphere, leaping from one planet to the next via super-fast JumpShips to challenge other players and take on mercenary jobs. The game's "roving mercenary" approach worked well in *MechWarrior*, and was in fact a principal reason for the game's longevity. But in *MultiPlayer BattleTech*, the vast universe served as a deterrent to player interaction. It was far too difficult to find live opponents in this vast web of worlds, as there were just too many places to be. After several minutes of jumping vainly from planet to planet, would-be MechWarriors often despaired of finding intelligent life and simply gave up.

The Windows 95-based *Solaris* remedies this problem by containing all the action on one world. There are several different arenas for players to fight in, and it's possible to roam the planet, but as a whole the game world is much smaller, thus correcting the feeling of vast, empty space that drove gamers away from the original.

After naming a pilot, players are free to roam the planet via a unique interface consisting of four boxes arranged in a cross. Each box depicts a location: the top box shows the location to the north of your character, the bottom box shows what you'll encounter if you walk south, and so forth. Navigation is achieved simply by clicking on these boxes. There's also a subway system that, when entered, lets players travel from one location to another instantaneously.

A brief text description accompanies each location, and chat windows allow you to interact with any other players who happen to be in the same locale. A remote broadcast option is also available, allowing you to chat with distant players.

After figuring out where the action is (usually by checking a roster of pilots and noting their location), players can head over to a stadium for battle. Battles can be team affairs or free-for-all bouts, with up to eight players in a single fight, arranged into any conceivable team configuration they can dream up. In other words, there can be any number of teams, of any size, the only limit being the eight-player maximum – a welcome feature indeed.

Combat itself is solid and entertaining. As of this printing, the action lacks some of the visceral, immediate appeal of *MechWarrior 2*, but it's still fast and good-looking, and perhaps more suited for human vs. human games than that popular title. The keyboard is laid out for ease of play, with multiple keys controlling weapon selection and view mode. There aren't as many esoteric options as you'll find in *MechWarrior 2* (e.g. multiple view modes, such as out-of-cockpit views and enhanced imaging), so it's easier to find the vital commands.

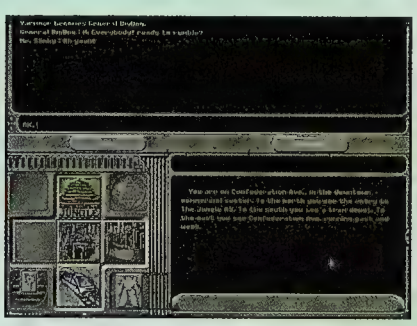
Mouse targeting has been incorporated into *Solaris*, allowing a degree of fine-tuning not available with the keyboard. Players can control their Mech's direction and speed with the keyboard while handling torso twists and firing with the mouse. This upper body/lower body split is a natural way to handle a Mech, and quickly grows on you.

as a whole the game world is much smaller, thus correcting the feeling of vast, empty space that drove gamers away from the original

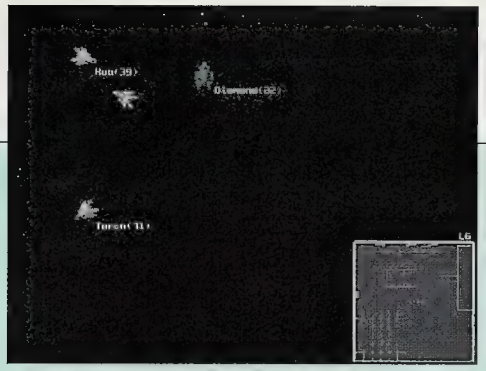
Anyone who loves the Mech genre will have lots of fun with Kesmai's *BattleTech: Solaris*. Fast combat, tons of Mech designs, and a much improved (smaller) game world allows gamers to find the action quickly and painlessly, and have a blast when they get there. Certain minor quibbles remain: sluggish mouse control of torso movement and a lack of custom-designed Mechs, to name the most obvious. The game is not yet complete, of course; these issues may well be addressed in the final version. But even if nothing changes by the time the game appears on-line, this one looks to be a winner. Expect it to appear on America Online, CompuServe and EarthLink networks later this year. For now, though, you can check out **www.kesmai.com** for the latest information.

–joe grant bell

Line 'em up and blow 'em up



Mr. Slinky and General Big Dog get ready to rumble via the new interface



Here's the SubSpace web site

SubSpace

Virgin goes where few games have gone before

Veterans of the Internet are familiar with *Netrek*, a multi-player space combat game boasting a slick graphic interface and fast, arcade-style action. From two to sixteen players on two to four teams take control of tiny spaceships and fly around in a suspiciously square galaxy, attacking enemy planets and doing combat with other ships in a flat (2D) realm, armed only with a top-down view of their ship and a fistful of photon torpedoes.

The great strengths of *Netrek* are its multi-player connectivity, its team play, and perhaps most impressive, its fast graphic action. Unfortunately, if you want to be involved, you almost need a UNIX-based machine with a direct Internet connection; most of your foes will have such an arrangement, so your old 14.4 modem isn't good enough to give you respectable game speed. Furthermore, some conversions of the basic client program from UNIX to Windows are spotty, and anyone using less than a 17" monitor will inevitably become frustrated, because high resolution (1024X768) is a necessity. After being hosed time and again by players on UNIX accounts with T1 connections, it becomes painfully obvious that *Netrek*'s hardware requirements are stringent indeed.

At a time when 3D action games are cropping up all over the Net, using every ounce of bandwidth and making great demands on the home player's modem, Virgin has chosen to revisit the sprite-based world of *Netrek*. *SubSpace*, their Internet-only game of space combat, provides an experience much like that of *Netrek*, but with many more players, much better graphics, a Windows 95 interface, and solid gameplay.

Game mechanics are simple but multi-faceted. Players navigate the galaxy with a cadre of teammates, earning points by destroying enemy ships (and sometimes by capturing flags, depending on the map they're playing on). This simple kill-or-be-killed dynamic is made more interesting by the inclusion of numerous power-ups, which look like green floating asteroids. Cool items include three levels of ship guns, thrusters, mines, gun enhancements like bouncing shots and triple-fire, cloaking and stealth devices (the former hides you from players' viewscreens, while the latter hides you from their radars), and warp devices. The variety is nearly endless.

Each player has a "bounty" that's calculated by the amount of power-ups onboard his or her ship, and how good s/he is overall. A ship with tons of neat gadgets yields lots of points, so it's tempting to go gunning for the most skillful players instead of picking on helpless newbies. Beating on particularly clueless newbies can even yield you negative points. That's a nice feature.

Another nice feature is your ship's power rating. All ship functions – including firing your weapons – use power, and power doubles as "hit points" for your ship. This means that you won't get ahead by mindlessly firing your weapons, as you'll only be depleting your own power reserves and making yourself more vulnerable to enemy fire. Thus, players do best when they choose their shots carefully.

There are four basic ship types, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. The standard Warbird starts out stronger and more maneuverable than other ships; the Spider has a built-in stealth device; the Javelin is extremely fast; and the Leviathan has bombs onboard. Since power-ups can be used without restriction on every ship type, your choice of ship isn't as crucial as you might think; you can make a Leviathan fast with speed power-ups, or make a Warbird sneaky with a Stealth device.

The well-balanced mechanics of *SubSpace* would be wasted if the game engine itself didn't work smoothly. Even in this preliminary stage, gameplay is fast and relatively seamless. Enemy craft glide across the screen smoothly, with a minimum of jerks and network hiccups, even when the server was hosting over sixty players in a single game.

The stylized outer space regions where combat takes place can be customized to a large degree: walls, asteroids, "safe areas," wormholes, black holes, and other features add variety and excitement to the playing field.

All things considered, *SubSpace* looks to be a big hit on the Internet. It's simple but not simplistic, with addictive game mechanics and the ability to host over sixty players in the same game at once. Furthermore, unlike many on-line offerings, it's fast to download, painless to install, and easy to get into (thanks to a hint system that flashes helpful messages as you fly through space). Check it out at **www.vie.com/sniper/**.

–joe grant bell

SimCity 2000: Network Edition

the classic software toy revisited

Proposals can be drafted for sharing resources

SimCity 2000: Network Edition, newly released by Maxis, features a full Windows 95 version of *SimCity 2000* that's been modified for modem, network and Internet play. Up to four players can participate over a LAN or the Internet, and if the multi-player aspect wears thin, this CD also includes all the goodies that came with previous collections, including several new cities, scenarios, and a city/building editor called the Urban Renewal Kit.

In this incarnation of the game, players take the role of city commissioners. Instead of building wherever they want, they must first buy land before developing it. A wide variety of "political" options allow players to share vital resources.

Network options are well-implemented and easy to use, and players can even join or leave games in progress. The game itself plays much like the original game, though with a slightly more streamlined interface. This similarity to previous versions will please hard-core fans, but may disappoint gamers looking for something novel.

Ultimately, this sameness is the biggest problem with the game. *SimCity*'s most devoted fans have already purchased the game in one form or another, either on disk or CD, and will only get their money's worth from this version if they spend lots of time on the network. While the newly streamlined interface is nice, and the Windows 95 conversion was undoubtedly a major undertaking, these things by themselves can't justify another $50 purchase for most gamers.

For those who weren't too keen on *SimCity* in the first place, this package doesn't add much appeal. One would think that having several competing land developers would add more of a challenge – more of a *game* – to this software toy, but in reality the network competition is quite low-key. Sure, you can buy tracts of land that another player wanted to buy, or try to amass more land than the other players, but it would have been nice to see some really cut-throat competitive options added. Scoring options would also have been nice; as it stands, there is never a clear-cut winner or loser, which makes for some fairly dull games.

Anyone looking for a relaxed network game with minimal stress and strong cooperative elements will enjoy *SimCity 2000: Network Edition*. Others should stick to *Duke Nukem 3D*.

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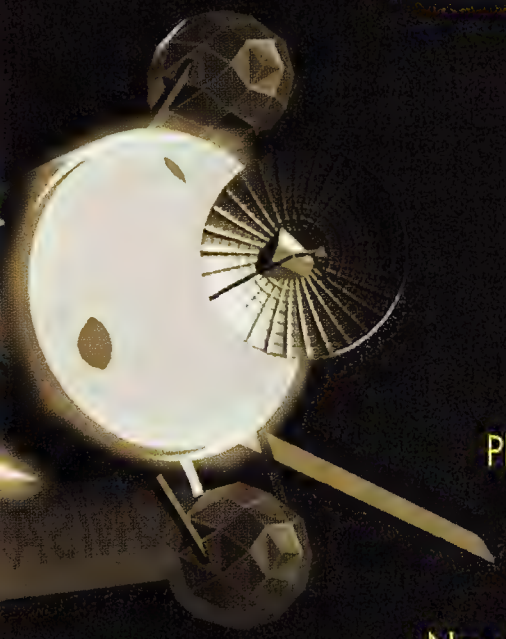

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by Tom Chick

The trend towards simplicity

Wargaming for the Doom generation

This month I'm letting Tom Chick take over the Command Post *lectern for his take on the trend towards simplification in wargaming. Let us know* your *opinions! – Scott Udell*

My first wargame was Gary Grigsby's *Mech Brigade*. The manual featured all sorts of complex formulae for calculating hits and line of sight and armor penetration. It was like high school algebra all over again. It made my head hurt. I loved it.

Ten years later the same company, SSI, released *Panzer General*. Rumor has it that its inspiration came from a console game, and it boasted the depth of paper-rock-scissors. It took enormous liberties with history. My five year old sister could play it. I loved it.

This apparent progression is evident in other companies, too. Atomic's latest game, *Close Combat*, is even simpler than *Panzer General*: it may very well be the first numberless wargame. This is particularly surprising coming from the guys behind the *V for Victory/World at War* series, a veritable spreadsheet of a wargame if ever there was one. TalonSoft has taken up Atomic's standard as the producers of historically detailed titles, but even their releases don't live up to the complexity and depth of the old days. Their *Battleground* series eschews algebra for +1's and -1's to basic die rolls, and the letters A-F are used to rate unit quality rather than numbers.

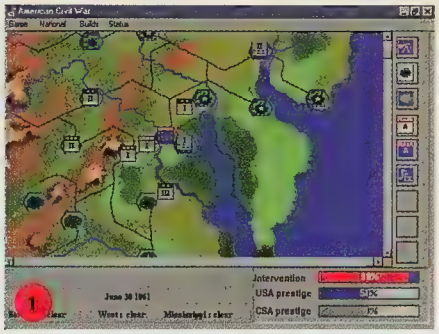
Is this the general trend, a movement towards simplicity, away from the challenge of complex formulae and in-depth detail? Are wargames being dumbed down for the *Doom* generation? Or are interfaces just streamlining and leaving all the numbers in the background? Will we see algebra in any more manuals, or is minutiae passé?

"If you frustrate the gamer, you'll lose them quickly," said Rick Martinez, the Associate Producer of *Panzer General* and *Allied General*. "There are too many games and not enough space on the shelves to risk that." Charles Moylan of Big Time Software, the developers *of Flight Commander 2* and *Over the Reich*, agrees. "Developers would like to sell more games. Making wargames simpler is one way to accomplish this," he said. Keith Zabalaoui, the president of Atomic Games, put it this way: "Our *V for Victory* and *World at War* series demanded a steep learning curve and a sort of devotion that many people were not willing to commit to. *Close Combat* tries to remove those barriers."

But one man's barrier is another man's delight. There is a small niche of hard-core wargamers who embrace the steep learning curves and take a perverse pleasure in the early stages of frustration. But it seems that "small" is the operative word here: Martinez told me that one of the hardest things for the hard-core wargamers to accept has been their numbers. He explained that every new title from SSI has to anticipate at least 35,000 copies sold, numbers that just don't pan out when you cater to one niche. But what this does do is leave the field wide open for smaller companies: "Scott Hamilton, for instance, has taken that concept and run with it," said Martinez.

Hamilton, whose unabashedly complex games have made him something of an *enfant terrible* among developers, has no qualms admitting that "novices are going to be hard-pressed to play my games." He sees the simplification of wargames as a way of expanding the genre to new players. With the success of *Panzer General*, "the circle has extended to strategy gamers, and maybe even some action gamers," he said. Along the lines of Hamilton's games, Interactive Magic's *American Civil War* is a detailed and intricate grand strategic game. The game's designer, Frank Hunter, said, "There will always be a market, however small, for more complex games that take a long time to play all the way through, but which give a player a better sense of the subject. Perhaps the simpler games will draw people in to trying the more complex fare."

When I asked Martinez about the likelihood of newer converts to the genre gravitating towards the more complex games, he dismissed the prospect as "optimistic." But aren't there a lot more wargamers after *Panzer General*, I asked. "There are more people who realize they can play wargames,"



[1] American Civil War: There will always be a market for complex games that take a long time to play through

[2] Close Combat: The first numberless wargame?

[3] Over the Reich: Keeping the complicated stuff more or less "under the hood"

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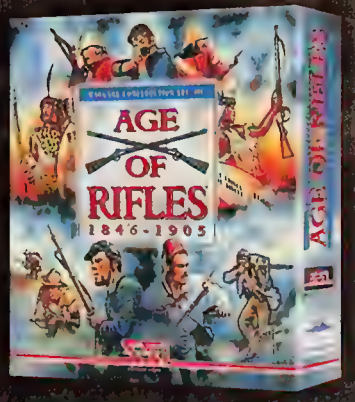

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he responded, implying not so much a conversion as an awakening.

So as the circle widens and the newer wargamers emerge, awaken, or otherwise arrive on the scene, what can we expect to happen to our genre? In talking to developers and looking at the newer releases, I see four trends:

The new school: "the primacy of entertainment"

The new school of thought in wargame design takes its cue from *Panzer General's* astonishing success. Moylan said the lesson learned is that "realism is all well and good, but it counts for nothing if the game isn't fun." Hamilton noted, "Most of the big companies are now placing a priority on the *entertainment* value of their games. Quite simply, over all other considerations, they're making them fun to play." Martinez remembered of *Panzer General's* design team: "It was clear throughout that where history met fun, fun would win."

SSI's *General* series is a testament to the effectiveness of this school of thought. After a quarter of a million copies and no less than five follow-up titles on the market or in development, game developers can little afford to argue with this idea. Now that *Panzer General* is the most commercially successful wargame of all time, the primacy of entertainment seems to be an incontrovertible fact.

Interface is God: "what they can't see won't discourage them"

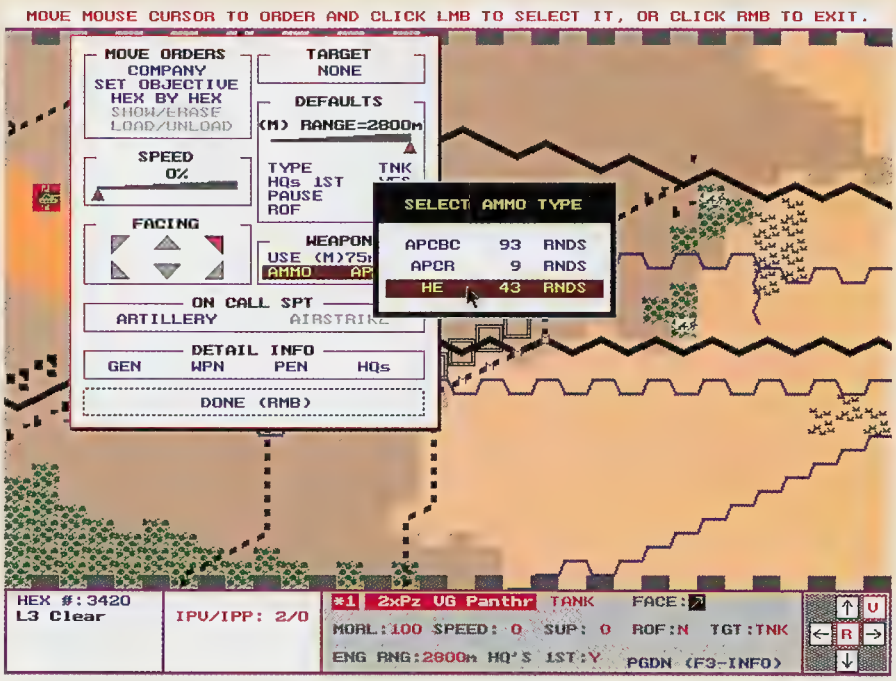
Behind the new school of thought is the conviction that "fun" and "ease of play" are synonymous and, therefore, interface is the new altar at which developers must sacrifice their working hours, the mighty god who must be appeased lest the volcano of customer ire erupts. Allen Adham of Blizzard, the masterminds behind the streamlined point 'n' click *Warcraft II*, has said, "A good interface shields the user from a game's complexity." Zabalaoui justified *Close Combat's* behind-the-scenes numbers by saying, "We want the player to be able to concentrate on playing and not on struggling with the interface." Moylan talked about "shielding the casual gamer from a nightmare spreadsheet of number and factors and tables." Number and factors and tables, oh my!

Martinez's goal? "My dream is a game that allows for *pure* strategy, where you don't have the interface as a barrier between you and the game. It's really difficult to write an elegant set of rules that frees you to concentrate on gameplay. Doing that would be a true work of genius."

Variable complexity: "to each his own"

Charles Moylan explained the intriguing compromise between complexity and playability that he's incorporated into *Over the Reich*: "Keep the complicated stuff more or less under the hood, with ways for the interested user to get at it if he [or she] wants. What some people view as essential detail, others see as too much information. A game should let the player decide how much information should be displayed." *Over the Reich's* difficulty levels don't dictate how hard it is to win, but how complex the rules are.

Some games come near this approach by letting the AI take over certain elements that require familiarity with the details. In Hamilton's games the computer can take over everything except movement. "When used judiciously, these options can make a game less tedious. But," he cautions, "when taken to an extreme, they can greatly reduce the player's involvement, which also reduces his incentive for playing the game." This sort of user configurability lets a game span the chasm between the new school and the old school, with something for old-timers and newbies in one box.



Tigers on the Prowl: Novices are going to be hard-pressed to play

The old school: "cantankerous old wargaming coots"

"Huge topics deserve good sized games," said Hunter, "games that give players a good feel for the strategies of war, something that a book can only hint at and which a dumbed-down version of the game couldn't do at all. If the movie *War and Peace* had been edited to an hour a half, it certainly would have had more viewers, but I don't think it would have been worth watching." With developers like Hunter and Hamilton and players like me, there will always be a place for games that want to give serious and extended treatment to historical periods, rather than games "in historical wrapping," as Martinez describes *Panzer General*.

But there is definitely a silver lining in these overbearing clouds of newer and easier games, a benefit that even the most cantankerous old wargaming coots will reap. Hunter explained it nicely: now that the wargaming market has expanded and the circle is wider, he said, "you can write for just a small segment of the overall market and still sell some games. For example, I don't feel any pressure to please people that don't enjoy the games I do, which gives me a lot of freedom to write what I like. The wargaming market used to be small enough that you wanted to try to sell to every wargamer. This resulted in a lot of wargames beginning to look alike. But by being able to focus just on people interested in the Civil War, I can produce a better model of that war than if I had to provide a system that would also simulate Napoleonic and Colonial warfare."

I have no claims to the moral high ground of being an old school purist, because I enjoy the new stuff that embraces the primacy of entertainment as much as the next guy. But I still want my complexity, my realism, my historical accuracy and algebraic formulae. "The new generation of games may not be "wargames" as far as hard-core gamers are concerned," said Hamilton, "but I think we'll still play them and enjoy them, while living up to our sobriquet of *grognard*: grumblers." And now that I've grumbled, I'm off to play *Allied General*. ■

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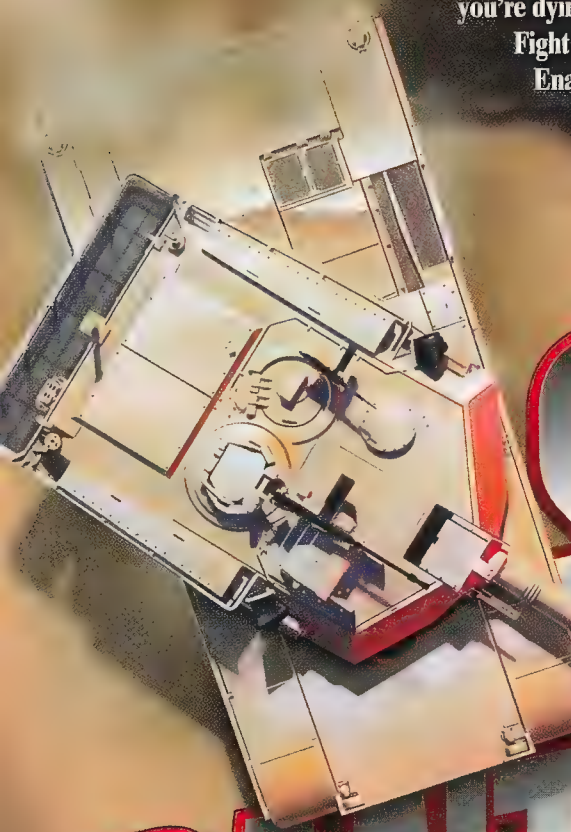

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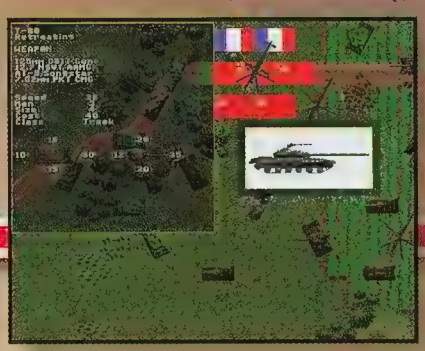

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by Mike Robel

Naval Formations

Some of the "classical" gun-oriented formations through World War II

In this installment, we will look at the use of formations in naval warfare, using SSI's *Great Naval Battles III*.

Formations at sea, like formations on land, mainly serve to provide the commander control of his subordinate units, or to concentrate firepower. In some ways, control of forces at sea is easier than control of forces on land; in others, it is more difficult. The ship will usually – almost always – go and fight where the captain wishes. With a land unit, the many individuals may or may not go where their commanders designate (that they often do says something about discipline, morale, and the behavior of people under fire).

Prior to World War II, commanders relied on signals (flags or blinkers) to control their force in combination with standing orders. Dispersion in these formations was limited by the distance one ship could see another to relay the appropriate signals. Reaction time was a factor of being able to see the enemy, report the contact, allow the commander to make a decision, relay the order back out, and then give the command to execute. As you can imagine, this could take a long time, and may have been one of the problems at the Battle of Jutland (find any picture of the battle – you will be amazed at all the smoke in the air). Several formations were used, including line ahead, line abreast, and scouting formations.

Line ahead (**Figure 1**) is best used for steaming, and for controlling the force in movement. Everybody simply follows the ship in front of them. Firepower is strong to the flanks and weak to the front. This characteristic is what drove commanders to attempt to cross the "T." That is, one force sails perpendicular to the other, enabling the crossing force to use their broadsides, while the other force uses only the turrets facing forward. The line ahead spaces its ships out in such a manner that they can provide overlapping fires against ships trying to break through the friendly ships. In the age of sail, effective range was only about 500 yards, but by World War II it extended to over 20 miles (over 30,000 yards). This also pushed task forces into more dispersed formations, because firepower could be concentrated more easily than was possible in the age of sail.

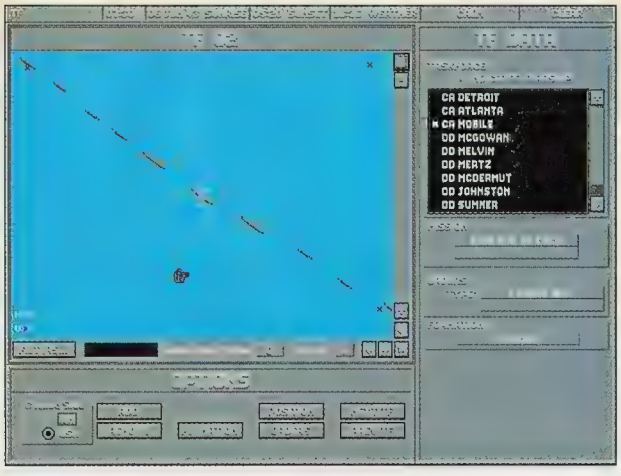


Figure 1

Figure 2

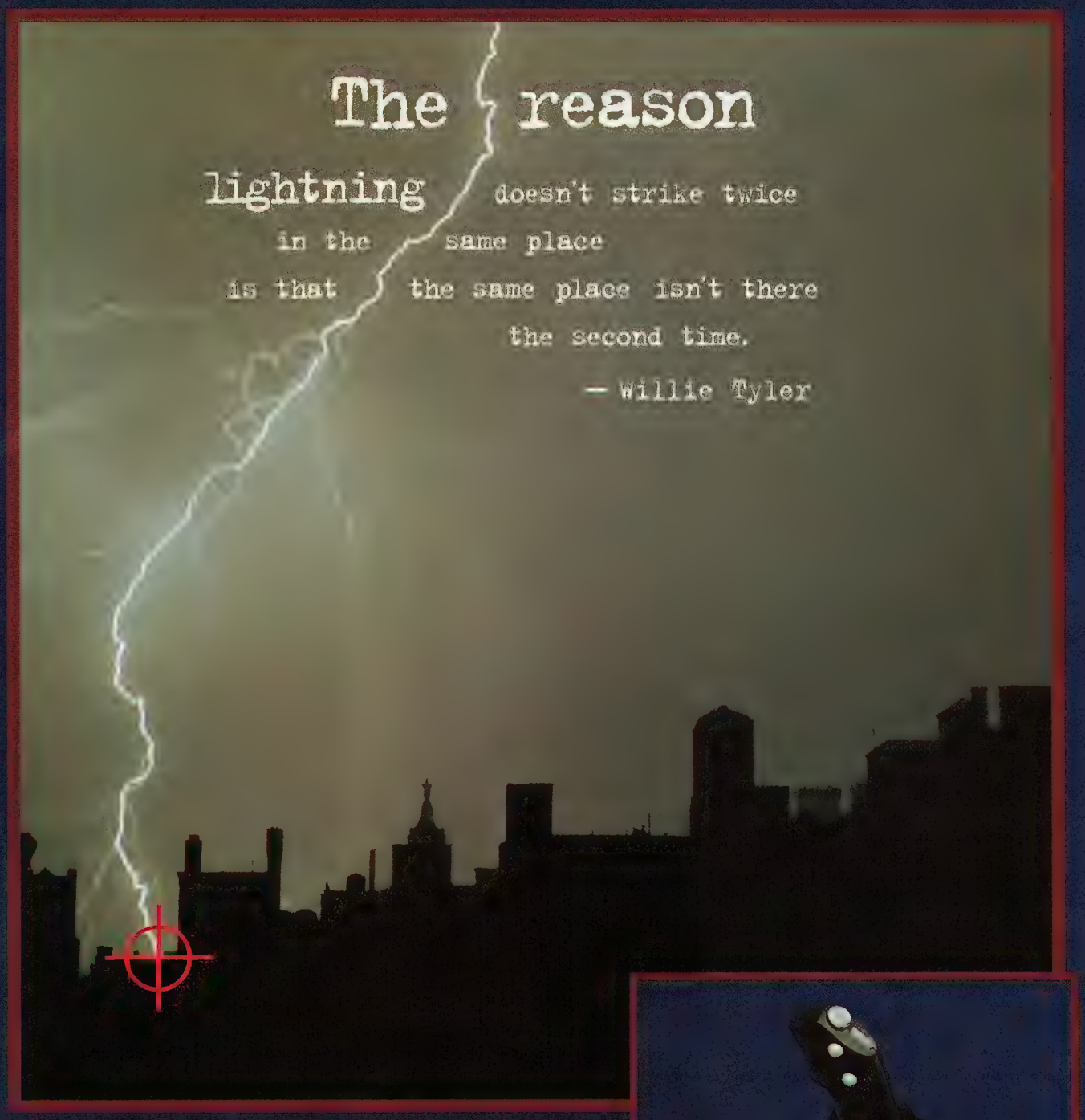
Line abreast (**Figure 2**) is difficult to control, because each ship plots its own course and keeps station with its neighbors on the left and right. The formation has moderate firepower to the front, because all the forward batteries can bear on the enemy while each ship can fire a broadside to the flanks if the commander is willing to take the risk of shooting over the head of friendly ships. Commanders could combine these formations by placing ships in divisions and having the divisions sail in line ahead formation, while the force as a whole is in line abreast. This provides slightly better control than placing the whole force in line abreast, and makes it relatively easy to bring the force to cap the T by merely having the divisions turning left or right to form the battleline.

Figure 2a

Figure 3

Before the advent of radar and airplanes, ships had to spot the enemy visually. Radio allowed the distance between scouting units and battle lines to open up considerably. Before radio, distance between units could be no greater than the visual range between them, and ships had to act as relay stations for signals. A battle formation used primarily as a method to turn into line ahead might look like **Figure 2a**.

Figure 3 shows the same force as it might deploy in a scouting formation. A line of destroyers is out forward to detect the enemy. The second line of two ships is there as a kind of reserve (although naval warfare doesn't really use the concept), but mostly to relay signals to the main body (the third line of ships). As will be discussed in a future installment, this and other formations move towards more sophisticated techniques necessary to coping with the increasingly spread-out and rapid-fire combat reality modern weapons systems impose. ■



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When the rifle was king

Wargame Construction Set III: Age of Rifles

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Wargame Construction Set... a phrase to make any wargamer all a-quiver with excitement. Needless to say, the next game in the series, *Age of Rifles*, has been one of the most anticipated wargames of the last couple of years and, after a series of rewrites, the game is finally out. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons it just doesn't live up to my expectations (hopes?) for the next game in the *WCS* series.

First off, *Rifles* is a DOS-based game which does not like Windows 95; heck, it's even finicky under DOS (make certain all your drivers are up to date!). Yes, I know the game engine is some two years old and yes, I know configuration hoop-jumping was the norm for us all not that long ago, but these days I find I have little patience for it all. On the other hand, a move to Windows 3.1/Windows 95 would have delayed the game quite a bit (years?), and would have alienated all the gamers staying in DOS.

The game covers ground combat from roughly the Mexican-American War up through the very earliest part of the 20th century. Over sixty scenarios and eight campaigns (three from the U.S. Civil War) encompass an impressive variety of conflicts, ranging from the well-known (Gettysburg) to the obscure (Kangwha Forts, U.S. forces against Korean troops in 1871). While the variety is extensive, and obviously quite a bit of research went into pulling the selections together, there are some problems with the collection; some of these are design related, and some are just mistakes (Washington, DC west of the Potomac?).

With *Rifles*' campaign system there is no carry-over from one scenario to the next; dead leaders and destroyed units are resurrected and positions change; this is particularly jarring when the battles are close together and you'd expect continuity between them, especially the multi-day battles. While some smaller battles are multi-day in one scenario, some of the major ones (like Gettysburg) can only be fought in daily chunks (chunks that, out of the Civil War campaigns, aren't linked).

Once you get into the actual battles, the mechanics of the game do a very nice job of covering the general feel of combat during this period. Units can assume an impressive variety of formations (depending on their training level), some can send out skirmishers, and you can set the "reactions" of units to certain variables. Many of these rules are optional; gamers can tailor *Rifles* to let them handle only what they want to deal with; kudos to SSI for this.

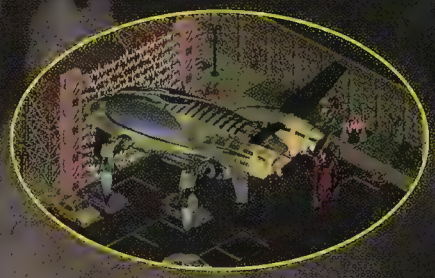
Clockwise from top: Rifles lets you set up situations in a wide variety of terrain and environmental conditions, from burning deserts to snowy fields; The interface throughout is pretty, if at times awkward. Here the Gazetteer information area is giving us a nice history on a campaign not included in the game; With the unit editor you can build up just about any force from the later half of the 19th century (or some that existed in no century); The map editor module showing its weakest point, the tile selectors

The AI performance is surprisingly good, if quite generic and objective-focused. It is impressively aggressive, something many computer opponents have trouble achieving. You can adjust the level of AI; at first my tests seemed to indicate that this primarily affect its aggressiveness, but after whaling on a Union artillery unit with four Confederate units turn after turn with no long lasting effect, I have to wonder if more is going on behind the scenes.

One element I have to question is the melee combat; it seems that a successful assault can go too far, carrying both the retreating unit and the assaulting unit off quite a few hexes (more hexes than their movement allowances should allow). While a human player can always stop before they get ridiculously far behind enemy lines, it's awfully tempting to keep hammering away... a temptation the AI can rarely ignore.

The map graphics look a tad cartoonish to me (not as sharp as either the TalonSoft *Battleground* games or SSI's own *Steel Panthers*), but they are certainly functional, and provide you with three unit display options. My biggest problem is the extremely limited main map view: only 10x6.5 hexes, compared to *WCSII: Tanks!'s* 14.5x12. True, there is an overview map, but the game really should have offered at least two zoom levels on the main map. The rest of the graphics – especially in the huge variety of unit uniforms – are quite nice, the battle sounds are limited but functional, and the music is very impressive.

Of course, perhaps the chief draw of this game is the fact that it is a construction set which allows you to build your own battles. Again, we have something of a mixed bag. For *Rifles* the designers made the wise choice of splitting up the editor into modules: map, order-of-battle, and scenario/deployment. This lets you mix and match pieces (you can even load in existing scenarios and save the individual components to combine them in fun new ways, like having the Zulu and the British fighting over Washington, DC). While a random map generator is present, there is



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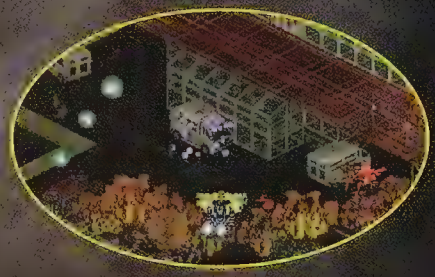

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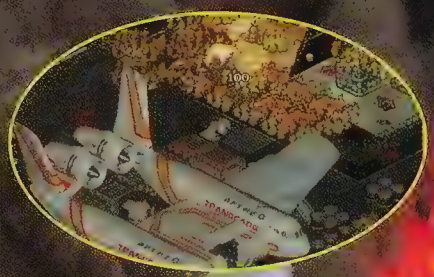

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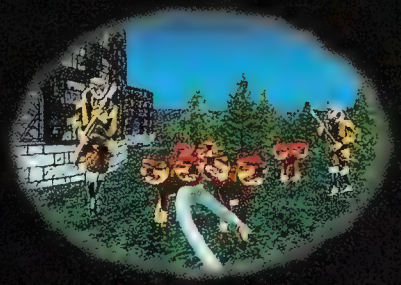

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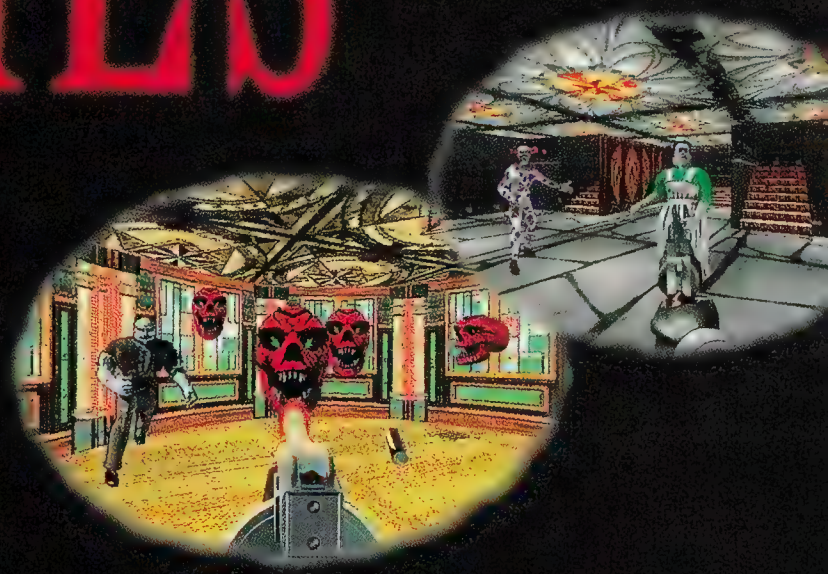

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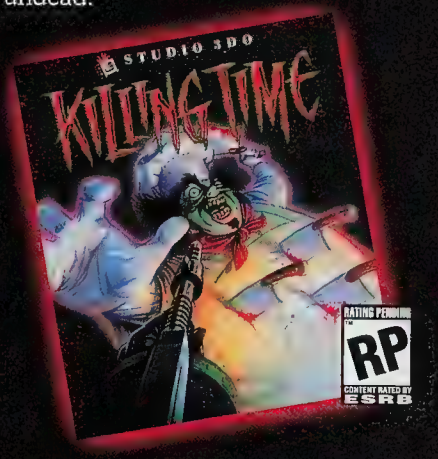

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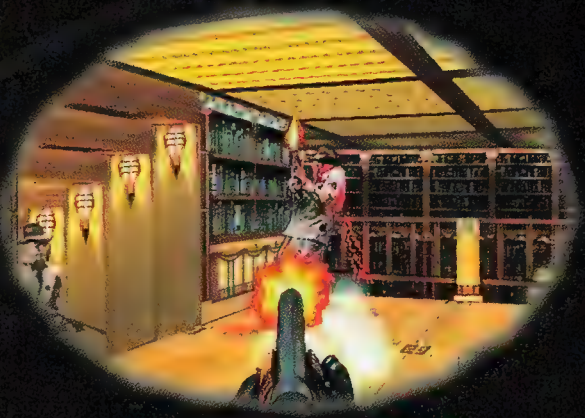
supernatural storyline



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surprisingly no way to generate random forces like you could in *Tanks!* – a major omission for anyone without the time to hand-craft their own battles. The editor does allow you to create your own campaigns, but as noted above there is no real connection between the individual scenarios in a campaign; the instructions for performing the linkage are also a bit vague.

The tools themselves are quite powerful, letting you set up a huge variety of forces and maps. While generally easy to use, both the map and OOB modules have some features which make them more difficult to use than necessary; for the map editor, it's the limited number of map tiles you can display in the palette at one time (three; yes, you can pop up a dialog containing all the tiles, but then they're too small to be useful), and for the OOB editor it's the system used to assign units to specific commands. I suppose that after extensive use both of these become less of a problem, but it makes for rough going when you start out.

Overall, my two main complaints with *Rifles* are that it feels too generic and that, despite the delayed development, there's a feeling it was rushed out the door before it was completely polished (dubious scenario details, information in the Gazetteer module that has nothing to do with the final campaign set, etc.). Everything is reduced to a database of numbers (even the units), so that the Civil War feels something like the Franco-Prussian War with less effective forces. Are you playing Zulus or Apaches or green, overtired Confederates? Obviously, a system that covers it all can't be expected to cover it all in specific detail, so it will really be up to the individual gamer to decide. While my tastes may have changed since *Tanks!*, however, I still remember having a lot more good old fashioned *fun* with it than I am having with *Rifles*. *–Scott Udell*

Robert E. Lee: Civil War General

Sierra

Windows

★★★☆☆

Sierra On-Line's *Robert E. Lee: Civil War General* puts you in Lee's boots and Traveler's saddle as the Army of Northern Virginia takes on the Army of the Potomac from 1861 to 1865. Available for Windows 3.1 and 95, *Robert E. Lee* uses a brigade-level, turn-based system, with 200 yard hexes and half hour turns, to simulate seven historical and one hypothetical battle between Lee's forces and the Union Army of the Potomac. The historical battles—First and Second Manassas, Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and The Wilderness — are joined by a "what if" struggle for Washington, D.C., as the capstone to Lee's efforts. Players can play either side against the computer in the scenarios, or can opt for modem or serial play against live opponents. The core of the game, though, is the solo campaign (you can draft a human to play the Union, but only with historical setups and forces), where the player takes on the burden of leading the South from Bull Run to the White House. Here, considerations of supply, weapons technology, and the health of leaders come into play.

The game is intended for novices and gamers with an interest in the War Between the States, not for the hard core grognard. Designer Jeff Fiske has created a game emphasizing morale and unit leadership at the expense of army organization, command and control, and tactical complexity. Facing, formations and logistics are heavily abstracted, zones of control are absent, and, except for artillery and skirmishers, units can only attack into adjacent hexes in a mixture of fire and melee combat. The game handles morale very well, and the combat process is quite elaborate internally, but the player is well insulated from the details. The campaign is hard wired, with no branching, and nothing the player does can affect the Union army in the next battle. Still, you get to upgrade your units, change leaders, and build an effective force over time, so there is lots to like.

Robert E. Lee certainly has its merits. It looks clean, has SVGA graphics, includes a nice historical overview, and makes good use of sound and video. The interface should be easy for new players to grasp, and the manual (a rarity itself these days) and tutorials get you started quickly. The campaign allows you to choose from many different weapons for your troops, and the tactics for each battle differ enough to maintain interest as the war progresses. The way the game displays unit statistics, with an option for color-coded bars and descriptive icons or hard numbers, works very well. For its intended audience, *Robert E. Lee* seems to hit the mark as an introductory game that does a good job in showing how crucial morale and leadership were to getting there first with the most.

It could have been better, however. The game runs in 640x480 only (higher resolutions are not full screen), has a very small playing area, the graphics are spartan and maps rather generic looking, without uniqueness or historical locations. Combat information is only available to the attacker; the defender has to figure out the results of combats by inspecting units on the next turn. Game abstractions result in oddities such as artillery looting supply from routing units 1000 yards away, and enemy forces blithely retreating through your lines and into the mouths of your cannons. While leaders are historical, individual units are generic; you get to lead the Virginia B Brigade and the South Carolina A Brigade into battle, hardly inspiring. And the computer opponent? Well, it's good as Burnside, not so good as Grant. Novices will be able to win with a little work; experienced campaigners will quickly turn to modem or serial play for solace. The campaign game is short, and with all respect to Marse Robert, some of the most interesting Civil War battles were in the west; beating up on inept Union generals of the week leaves something to be desired.

I found one minor bug, a statistical thing that isn't likely to crop up, and the folks at Impressions lost no time in fixing it. It seems that if certain leaders get killed and others promoted, there is a chance that the game will try to promote someone who has already been promoted. Very rare, according to Sierra, and they assured me that the patch would be released–by the time you read this–from their web site at **www.sierra.com**. Check the web site for other information and additional scenarios for *Robert E. Lee*. [*As soon as the patch is available, we'll put it on our CD as well - Ed.*]

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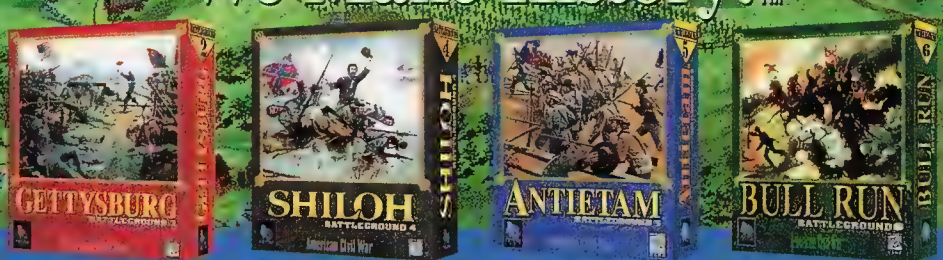

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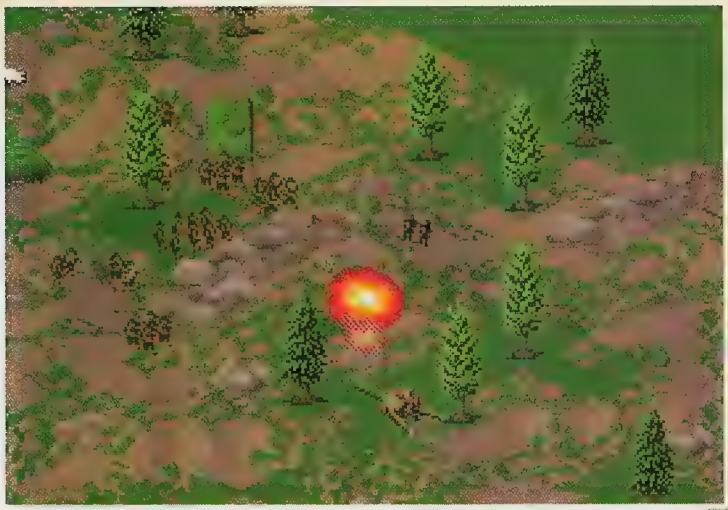

▲ Offensive

ZuluWar! ▶

All in all, as Maxwell Smart would say, *Robert E. Lee* "missed it by *that* much." A little more work on some of the rough edges and idiosyncrasies would have produced a game that a wider range of gamers could know and love. As it stands, Impression's latest is another one of the *Panzer General's* androgynous offspring, a game that offers wargaming flavor with rather less substance. A good introduction to wargaming, but one that barely hints at the joys of complexity and detail that make up the heart of true wargaming. *–Robert Mayer*

Offensive: The Ultimate Strategical Command Game

Ocean

DOS

★★½☆☆

Hmm… pretty precocious title! Based on the title and, especially, the blurbs on the back of the box, you might think Ocean wants you to think you have a pretty hot wargame on your hands; you might be leery, and you'd be right. Instead what you get is a little game vaguely reminiscent of a simplified (!) *Command & Conquer* mixed with a *Close Combat* lite (very, very, *very* lite). Throw out any thoughts of a real wargame – shucks, even throw out thoughts of a typical PC-level strategy game – and instead, think of what a strategy game on a Super Nintendo might be like; *now* you have a pretty good idea of what *Offensive* is really like.

In *Offensive* you control either Axis or Allied forces through 20 missions from D-Day to the fall of the Third Reich; despite what the box says and what some of the screen art indicates, you are *not* controlling French cavalry regiments or "mass ranks of Hittite archers." This is strictly World War II (unless they've hidden something in there that I haven't found). You control tanks and troops as you maneuver across isometric-perspective mission maps (the gameplay graphics are somewhat below those of the original *X-Com*). While many types of vehicles and troop units are represented, there's little differentiation in their use;it's pretty much human/vehicle wave throughout. Surprisingly, the missions themselves are fairly historic; it's just that they are *highly* abstracted from the real world.

The commands you issue are simple in the extreme: attack, move to, defend, and retreat. Simplicity is good, as the interface is terribly awkward; drag-selecting a group is painful; selecting a single unit is even harder. The movement AI is pretty stupid, as is the opponent AI. The game starts out too easy; I was through the first six missions as the Allies in just a couple of hours of play. I suspect that any half-decent *C&C* or *Warcraft II* player could play through the missions from both sides in just a few days.

Despite all these complaints, I was shocked to find myself actually having some fun with the game. There was a touch of "just one more mission"– not strong, but it was there. If you're looking for a *very* simple strategy game that will work on a lower-end machine, you might want to check out *Offensive*, but you'll probably want to wait until it hits the bargain bins. *–Scott Udell*

Zuluwar!

ISI

Windows

★★★☆☆

Unless you're a pretty hard core computer wargamer, you may not have heard of Jeff Lapkoff and his (one man?) company, Incredible Simulations, Inc. Jeff doesn't do wargames for the mainstream; in fact, given the American penchant for wanting only games where you can go on the offensive, his "lost cause" games probably won't hit it big with the *C&C* or *Panzer General* crowds. And that's a shame, because the games portray situations in military history that are no less important to study (or try gaming) than anything else.

His first two games, covering the Battle of the Alamo and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, were DOS-based and tactical in scale; his latest, *ZuluWar!* is both his first Windows game and the first strategic level game, which will come as a bit of a surprise to his fans. Nevertheless, it's a solid design decision; as he says in his design notes, "we decided that the stereotypical 'Slaughter the Zulu' tactical experience just wouldn't cover the overall dynamics of the campaign."

In terms of mechanics, the game is fairly modest: the graphics are not flashy, but are clean and sharp; more important for a wargame than eye candy is. The map is designed for 640x480; play at higher resolutions and you get a black border around it. This is a negative to me; Windows games–especially tile-based ones–should be able to show more map at higher resolutions (at least as an option, as in *MissionForce: CyberStorm*). Sound is limited, but functional. The best thing for many gamers is that the game comes on a single floppy, and will work on a 386 with four megs of RAM (although eight is recommended).

ZuluWar! shows off both the benefits and limitations of crafting a game for a specific conflict. Benefits include such things as new operating parameters unique to the conflict; for example, the Zulu units will temporarily demobilize after close combat, and the British will suffer losses due to tropical diseases (especially during rainy turns). This isn't a game of huge lines of troops pushing against one another; instead, it's a game of mobile conflict across vast stretches of land and time (hexes are approximately two miles and turns cover five days). Because of the low unit density, games are fast; even the fifty-turn campaign game can be completed in an afternoon. This, however, shows off one of the limitations of a game covering a specific conflict–long-term replayability is questionable. Lapkoff offsets this by providing several smaller scenarios, a number of

historical alternates, and PBEM possibilities (the low unit densities should make this a very good game for PBEM).

Overall, *ZuluWar!* accomplishes what it sets out to do. It doesn't have the gameplay depth that a *Steel Panthers*, *Battleground: Shiloh*, or *Tigers on the Prowl* does, and it may suffer from limited long-term appeal; but it covers a conflict rarely gamed on the computer, and does so in a manner approachable for both beginners and *grognard* players. *–Scott Udell*

Civil War: Master Player's Edition

Empire Software

DOS

★ ½ ☆ ☆ ☆

Perhaps the most difficult review is that in which one admires the effort expended by the designer but simply cannot accept the finished product. Empire's *Civil War* has been redesigned in *a Master Player's Edition*; registered owners of the earlier version may upgrade for $19.95, while the package for prospective purchasers is $49.95. Napoleon once stated that it is better to be lucky than skillful; sadly, the designers lack both virtues. Although *Civil War* has been made into a more challenging product, much ado about nothing does not ensure a success; at the same time Version 2.0 was released, *Road From Sumter to Appomattox* (now titled *American Civil War*) was re-released by Interactive Magic in a slicker and more accessible format.

The improvements to the game system are numerous: they include many bug fixes, a stronger artificial intelligence, and four additional battles. Yet, for all of the improvements, the system fails on two levels — as a simulation and as a game. As a simulation, strategic omissions are noted in the manual but unaccounted for in the game (e.g., Southern reluctance to invade the North and the higher rate of desertion when ordered to do so); as a game, the entire system is subject to question. In my initial review, I was impressed with the sheer magnitude of the system; however, after playing it over and over again, the real-time mode simply is unworkable for a strategic game. While the lack of time compels a quasi-fog of war, the more adept gamer will simply note his optimal moves, and then revert back to a prior saved position and be able to input them in a more time-saving fashion. The designer's prior effort *Fields of Glory* worked because battle was limited to hours and not years; one player may be able to span a battlefield in real-time; he cannot span a theater of war.

The initial version had historian Paddy Griffith's manual as an excellent reference, but it has been omitted from the *Master Player's Edition* due to budgetary considerations. Of course, the new edition has the major Civil War tactical battles as included add-ons: Antietam, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg and Chickamauga. Since the tactical playing field resembles a beta draft of *War College,* it is insufficient to attract a dedicated gamer. In conclusion, one may note that a master chef may spend hours in preparing a fine stuffing for Thanksgiving dinner, but it does not transform the bird into an eagle. *–M. Evan Brooks*

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Close Combat

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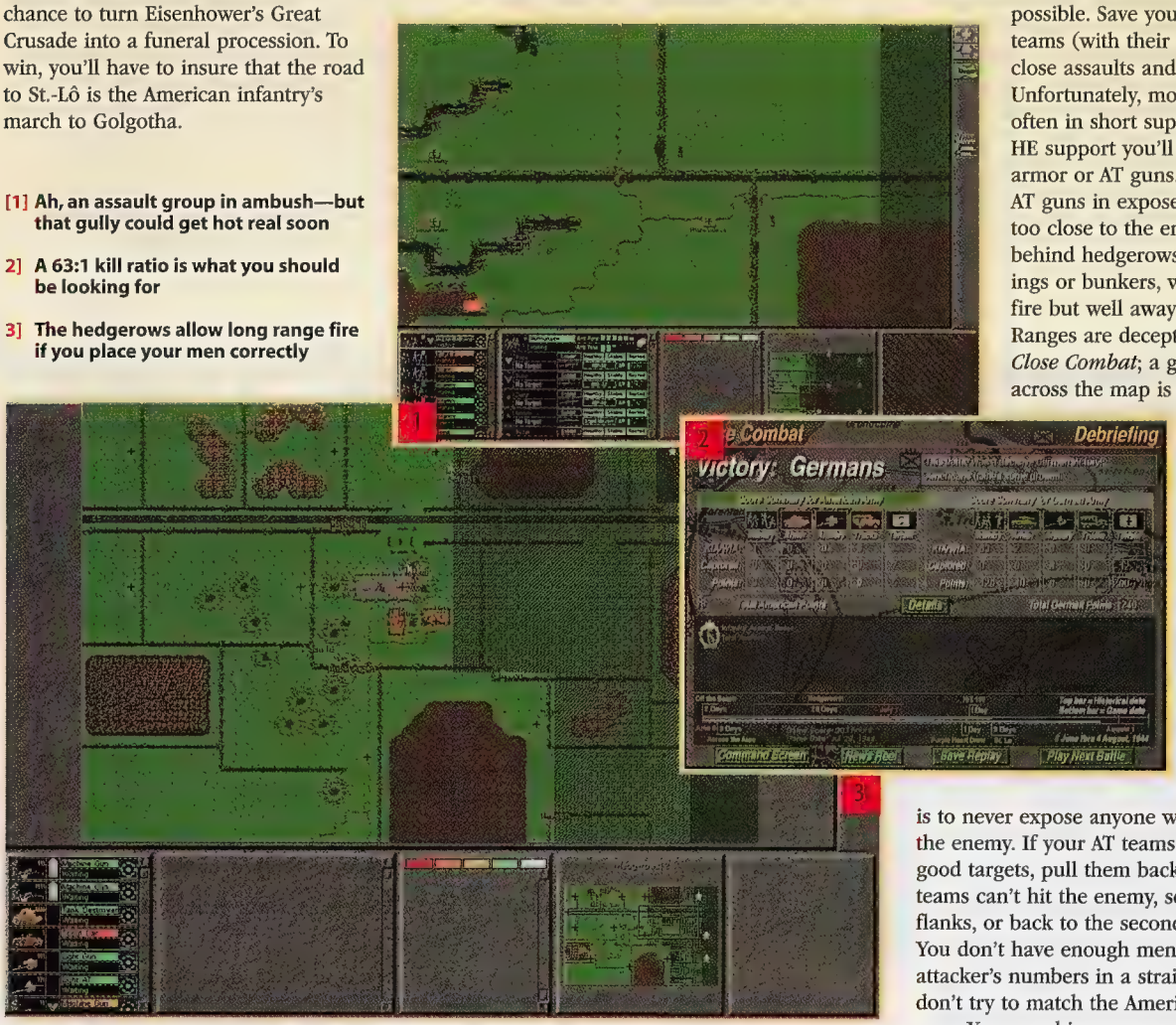
As the Germans in *Close Combat* you are outnumbered, outgunned, and in a hopeless strategic position. No matter how well you fight, the Americans will eventually take St.-Lô. Your job is to make this task as lengthy and costly as possible. You have several advantages over your foes, so use them. Your troops are better trained and more experienced than the GIs. You have more machine guns, better anti-tank weapons, and usually have the advantage in close-in fighting, due to your discipline and training. Most of all, you have the terrain of Normandy on your side. The hedgerows and farms of this part of France give you the chance to turn Eisenhower's Great Crusade into a funeral procession. To win, you'll have to insure that the road to St.-Lô is the American infantry's march to Golgotha.



[1] **Ah, an assault group in ambush—but that gully could get hot real soon**

2] **A 63:1 kill ratio is what you should be looking for**

3] **The hedgerows allow long range fire if you place your men correctly**

Conservation of force

Of course, the way *Close Combat* works, the better you do, the less support you get, so success can sometimes mean you have to do even more with less. If you win consistently, you'll never see the best armor, and mortars and heavy infantry will be scarce. Conservation of your force is thus a primary responsibility, second only to killing Americans. Leave the last stand heroics to the fanatics in the SS; you want to preserve not only the honor of the *Wehrmacht* but its soldiers as well. Kill enough GIs and they'll retreat, giving up any victory point (VP) locations they've taken. Do this two or three times in a row and you'll hold up their advance significantly, and still have the ability to strike back in the next series of battles. Be particularly chary of risking your assault guns and machine gun teams. These two systems will without a doubt kill more of the enemy than all the rest of your troops combined. Luckily, the American AT teams with bazookas aren't terribly effective, though their tanks are deadly at the short ranges prominent in *bocage* fighting. Use the long range of your MG 42s to lay down withering fires from safer distances, and use hedgerows to screen your armor. Unlike your opponent, you will have many more opportunities to trundle your armor up to the enemy and blast away at point-blank range. Once you've dispatched the Shermans, the bazookas become much less of a threat.

More problematic are the American infantry teams. These are numerous, and well armed, more than a match for your rifle teams without machine gun backup. Massed fire from the American semi-auto rifles and BARs can decimate your thin lines. Use your MGs and assault guns to kill as many Americans as you can, at as long ranges as possible. Save your rifle and scout teams (with their MP-40 SMGs) for close assaults and ambushes. Unfortunately, mortars are too often in short supply, so the only HE support you'll get is from armor or AT guns. Never put your AT guns in exposed positions, or too close to the enemy. Put them behind hedgerows, in stone buildings or bunkers, with good lines of fire but well away from the enemy. Ranges are deceptively short in *Close Combat*; a gun halfway across the map is still only a few hundred meters from the enemy. If the GIs get too close to your troops, they can pop smoke and run away, but your gun crews are stuck, so don't let the enemy get that close.

One good rule to follow is to never expose anyone who isn't killing the enemy. If your AT teams don't have any good targets, pull them back. If your SMG teams can't hit the enemy, send them to the flanks, or back to the second line of defense. You don't have enough men to overcome the attacker's numbers in a straight up fight, so don't try to match the Americans man-for-man. Your machine guns make up for a lot of deficiencies, but one casualty and even an experienced three man team will get shaky. Pulling back under fire isn't easy, so positioning is important. You have the range, so pick positions with good fields of fire and covered withdrawal possibilities. Your rifle teams

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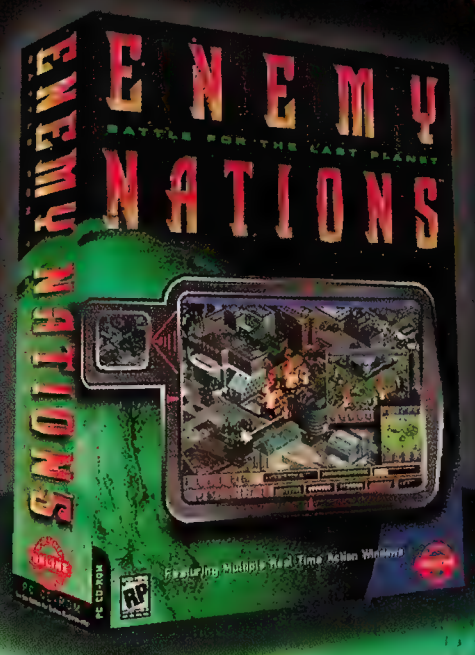

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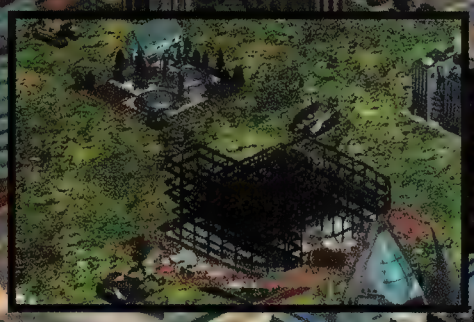

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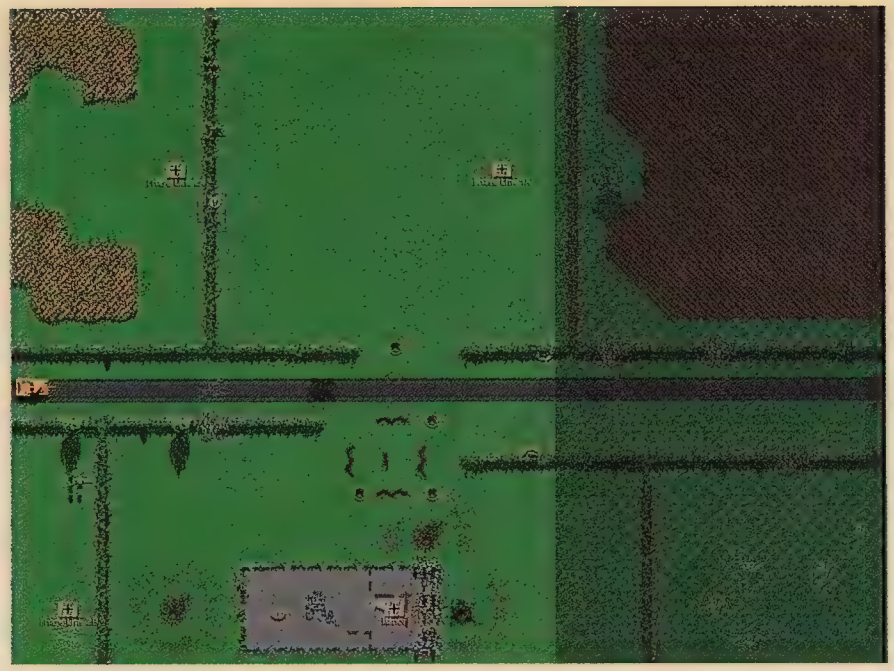

◀ These open spots are great killing fields

aren't as good as the Americans in laying down fire, but are ideal for supporting the MGs; that's what the *Wehrmacht* did in the war, and you should follow suit. In fact, you could say that the German commander's main job is helping the machine guns do the killing. Luckily for you, the Americans don't get that many MG teams.

Unfortunately, the Americans *do* get tanks, and usually several. Killing Shermans is a top priority. Tanks left free to roam around at will *will* massacre your infantry, so scatter a few AT teams among your machine gunners and riflemen. Maneuver your assault guns (or tanks, in the rare event that you have any) cautiously, to snipe at Shermans and M5s; you can usually win these encounters as long as you aren't ambushed yourself. Usually it's not worth the effort to focus on destroying American AT guns; they can't move, so you can just pull back, rendering them ineffective by default. Pulling back, it should be noted, is a great strategy in general. Shoot, kill, run; repeat as necessary, moving from one hedgerow to another. Don't worry, no one is going to tell the Gestapo. Infiltration can be effective, but it is also risky. In some cases, when the American advance leaves gaps on its flanks, infiltration is a great way to shower Purple Hearts on the enemy. Most of the time, however, any teams infiltrating will get chewed up by close-in American firepower.

It's the men that matter

The game focuses more on casualties and morale than on VP locations, and so should you. The default set ups are usually bad; they put too much of your firepower up front where the Americans will grind it into sauerkraut, or well away from the battle where it is of little use. Re-deploy your troops away from the front lines. Let the Americans cross the first phase line, take their initial VP spots, and then massacre them when they advance across the open fields. Don't get caught in a short range blasting match. Even in an ambush, short range fire-fights are more a matter of luck than skill. American short range firepower is powerful, and their numbers will tell. Sometimes you can defend a stone building fronted by a hedgerow; in that case, you can blast the Yanks when they crawl over the hedge, kill most of the them, and then either withdraw or hold depending on the situation. Always remember that you can't win if you die, but you can win if you run away and kill in the process.

Put your armor on roads, or in clear areas with access to roads. Usually, if your assault gun is covering a road, you'll get the first shot and often a quick kill. Armored, mobile machine guns and cannon are a soldier's best friend sometimes, however, so be careful. You have the advantage being on the defensive, but the enemy has numbers. Halftracks, *Kubelwagons*, and armored cars are little more than mobile machine guns. Use them with care, as they can die quickly; belly up to a hedgerow and fire away from beyond bazooka range, and withdraw if you see Shermans. Don't be afraid to shuttle your armor to hot spots; that's what the *panzertruppen* get paid for. Avoid fair fights. The American tanks react faster than your assault guns. Ambush them, use infantry AT teams and Panzerfausts when possible. Think biblical: thou shalt not suffer a tank to live.

And living is the name of the game. Pay attention to your men. The German player has the dubious advantage of having comparatively few troops. You can thus keep a closer eye on individual teams. Watch the ones which contain men of insufficient motivation (those that frequently end up with acts of cowardice indicated on the post-battle info screens). These sub-par troops should be used in the rear, while those men eager to find out where the Iron Crosses grow should be used at the sharp end. Particularly after you've decisively defeated a couple of attacks, don't hesitate to fall back and play it safer. The time you've already gained will cushion the blow of any minor defeats. Always remember that Germany has little need for corpses in 1944; *Der Führer's* ambitions have already laid in a thousand year supply. ■

[1] What happens when Marder meets Stuart...

[2] ...and what happens when more guests arrive

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PC Games - July '96

"The Settlers II is silly, beautifully balanced, graphically attractive, and strategically fascinating. Easy to play and tough to win, it's a delightful way to waste the next few seasons of your life...You don't want to miss this one...superbly detailed Super VGA artwork and whimsical animation...The Settlers II is eye-catchingly unique."
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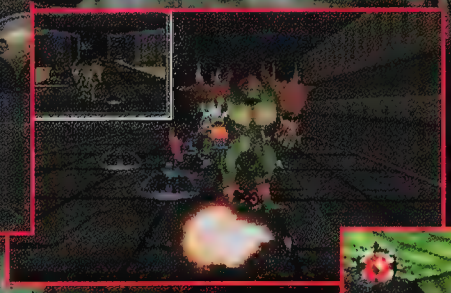

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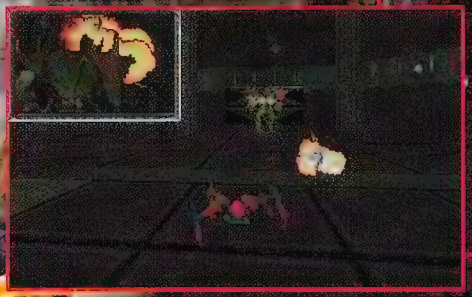

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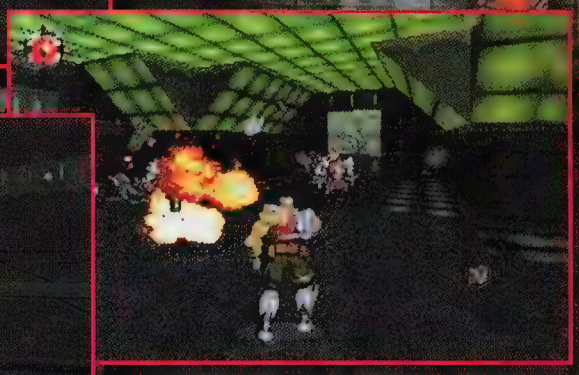

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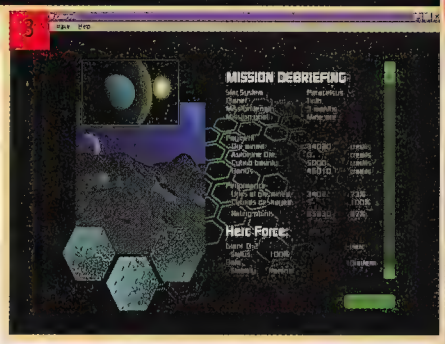
AMS004s

MissionForce: Cyberstorm

Cybrid Incursion: The Gehenna Campaign

Excerpt from Cmdr. Rystal's address to Repple Draft 76221-9, Mos Alma base, Pyros IV: "... and for those of you who think that questioning MSI's operational and strategic plans is a ticket to promotion, I cordially remind you of Ensign Hibert's gaff when she referred to the Main Synthetic Intelligence as 'Cynthia' over open channels during a SEAR op. Hibert made her final operation two weeks later; sealed in a Sensei bomb drone ..."

Excerpt from Com-Log A3B-Q Herc Commander Thé, Mu Farsis base, Hades: "... Despite my initial misgivings, I have to agree with MSI's protocol of blooding new recruits. The fear of suffering a fate similar to Hibert's probably saved my hide when I first started out as an Ensign. It happened during a routine sweep on Brell when a Cybrid cluster burnt through the 'rim and nearly fragged the carrier. The chewing out I got from Cmdr. Burrell was nothing compared to the two weeks I spent in MedBay after Chief Pilot Chang cornered me in the Debrief room. The other 'zines just ignored my plight ... probably wondering when it would happen to them! When you're given just one chance to prove yourself you can't afford to stuff up; Unitech takes it's profits seriously ..."



[1] Meet Boffo the wonder chimp, complete with attitude prob lem and loose diapers; the only 'derm whose Herc ports a pooper-scooper
[2] In a brief jump into an alter native universe, Mentor takes time out from training Lensmen and lazily enjoys his nutrient bath
[3] A successful mining mission; no auto-mine bonus for the Unitech accountants

Delta-2A/1: Herc Management

"Remember that each Herc chassis supports different combinations of weapons. For example, the Shadow can carry lasers and missiles but can't support cannon and other ballistic weapons. If you're on a planet with unpredictable atmospherics which stuff up your beams and homers, this crate isn't for you.

The other effect of a unique chassis is that each has its own vulnerabilities. Some Hercs can carry long range weapons but minimal close-in protection. Force Leader Zack found this out the hard way when his pair of Demons got fried by a swarm of Parasites porting ELF beams; they raced into close range before he could track 'em, and escaped with nary a scratch. Always purchase Hercs in mutually supporting pairs; the buddy system allows your 'derms to protect each others' flanks, as well as pick on single cybrids that come too close.

Choose Hercs and systems appropriate to the mission you've chosen. If the planet has low G, send your ballistic shots into orbit then ditch your cannons and take something else. You get full credit on all sales, so feel free to scrap your Herc fleet at any stage and rebuild from scratch.

Selling and purchasing Hercs continually can take literally hours in the Herc Bay, tinkering with weapon configs and system setups; save yourself the time by saving a few "stock" Hercs using the Save Herc Configuration option. This'll allow you to rebuild a complete fleet in minutes, with only minor adjustments required before battle. Having identical weapons configs for each Herc class also makes tactical decisions on the battlefield easier.

Don't leave your credits at base; you don't gain any interest, and the other recruits will try to nick 'em while you're out in the field. If you think your current mission could be bloody and you're saving your dimes for future repairs, you're probably performing the wrong mission; pick an easier one and spend all your creds on Hercs and 'derms.

Upgrade your Hercs at every opportunity, 'cause the Cybrids surely will. When you get a promotion, you also gain new technology; don't be afraid to use it.

There are two types of Hercs you should be purchasing; Marauders (for doing the grunt work) and Scouts (for spotting potential targets). Configure the former with lots of powerful weapons and good shielding; don't worry about speed too much, as you'll be letting the cybrids come to you. Your scouts should be as light as possible and carry the best sensors you can buy; use them to locate cybrid concentrations, and remember to keep them out of the battle when the fireworks start. I didn't use scouts until well into the Ionis system (and only lost 2 Hercs assaulting that main base on Beran) but your mileage may vary. Remember that each scout is effectively one less Herc when it comes to beating up cybrids."

Delta-2A/1-1: Weapons

"Okay, you've got to the fun bit. Let's talk about serious hardware.

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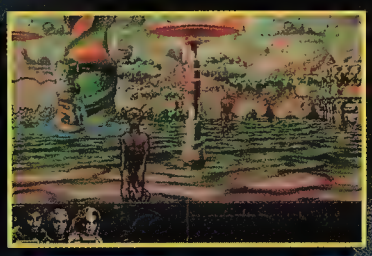

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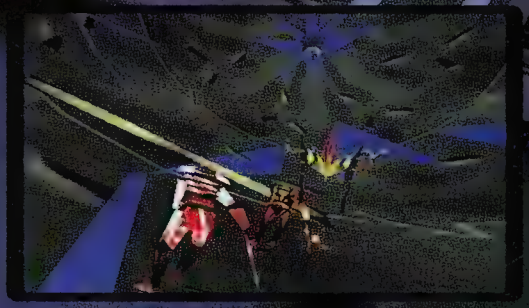

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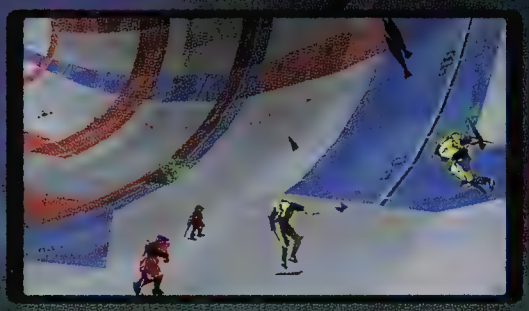

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First rule of arming Hercs: make sure you're packing enough anti-shield systems. Most of the weapons you'll be using in the Paracelsus system require you to down cybrid shields before you can start peeling away the armor. Balance your anti-shield and anti-armor systems accordingly. Also, divide the weapons evenly across each element of your Herc pairs; this'll reduce the chances of losing all your anti-armor bite when one of your Hercs bites the dust.

Some rookies used to think that using ELF systems to dissect cybrids with active shields was a neat thing to do. Here's some free advice: leave the ELF in the woods where it belongs. The only way you're going to get the chance to use it is if you're face to face with the enemy; unless you kill 'em all during that turn, you're going to get some feral cybrid running around behind you and giving your ass a blast you'll never forget!

Take a good mix of energy and projectile weapons; once you've downed the cybrid shields with your energy weapons you'll still have the capability of damaging their internal systems with your cannons and missiles, even if you're at low power."

Delta-2A/1-2: Other Systems

"Use anti-grav and over-drive systems to counteract the heavy weapons and chassis you'll be using later in the campaign; a scout with both of these systems will literally fly across the surface of low-G moons and planetoids.

Don't mount mining equipment on every Herc; just configure several to do the shovel work once the enemy has been neutralized.

Always mount ECM; there's nothing more pleasing than watching four or five particle beams whizzing over your right shoulder ... and nothing more irritating then seeing them hit!

While self-repair won't be an issue during most missions, don't neglect your nanotech systems during the final battle of each system; trust me – you'll need them then."

Rho-4Q/1: Bioderm Management

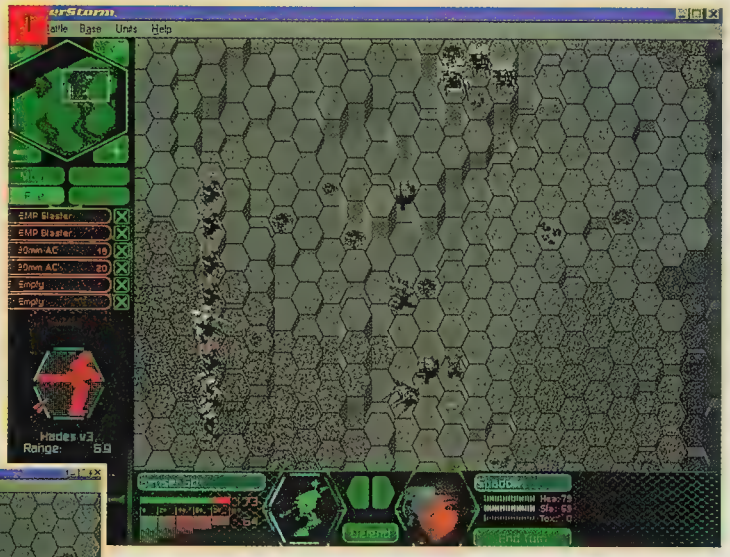
"I always used to generate 'derms with long life spans. Heck, if you're forking out good creds for your troops you want value for money; you don't want 'em 'plasing into goo when they're just getting good at their game.

Use the Virtual Reality Trainer extensively; it's cheap, effective and greatly improves your 'derms' value in battle. Don't rely purely on expensive targeting computers; all they do is counter enemy ECM systems.

Much as I like to assign my 'derms to their rigs, Unitech does provide an effective Autolink system; by the time I was fighting through the Ionis cluster I was relying on the 'linker to perform all my unit assignments. Some borderline cases do occur on occasion so feel free to step in and adjust the pilots if you have the time."

Omega-9Y: Battlefield Tactics

"Here are some simple tips that'll save your butt in the field.



[1] Cybrids may be thick on the ground ... but the same goes for their AI. Lure them into a ravine with a small team (the guys to the north) ...
[2] ... and send them straight to hell with your main cluster! It's worth it just to see the nice fiery wreck animations

Concentrate your Hercs. Keeping your forces together allows you to project maximum firepower where you need it.

Maneuvering in line-abreast has several advantages. During the final battle on Beran, a solid line kept most of the enemy Verminus out of ELF (and self-destruct) range. It also provided my units with clear lines of fire; even friendly Hercs can mask your own unit's weapons. Finally, shields can be maximized to the two hexes in front of your Hercs, allowing adjacent units to shield your flanks. Only split up into small groups when you're facing a small cybrid presence and always travel in pairs.

Gang up on cybrids. Two Hercs firing at the same side of any cybrid will toast him pronto. Remember that if you shoot at cybrids from behind, they will eventually turn around and shoot back at you. It can be very frustrating having downed the shields on your target, only to see it turn and conceal its vulnerable side once more, so mass fire on individual cybrids.

When you move across the battlefield, always move short distances and make sure your available reactor and battery power is high; you'll need the energy to take reaction shots at nearby cybrids.

Enemy cybrids aren't as bright as they could be. They tend to like depressions to hide in, working on the principle that they can't be shot at. They also regard the closest Herc as the greatest threat. Use these facts in your battlefield strategy. You can use your scouts to lure the cybrids into an ambush, keeping them in small hollows or behind masking terrain at the end of each turn. Maneuver the enemy into a depression, while keeping your main force just beyond weapons range, and lure them along it until they're strung out. Finally, move your main force forward and hit them in the flank.

Always use terrain to your advantage. Right click on hexes to see what kind of offensive and defensive benefits you'll gain; that towering Zaquath tree may provide enough protection from stray rounds.

When you meet your victory conditions and are prompted to return to the carrier for extraction, don't do so immediately. If your Hercs are still damaged, use any remaining nanotech modules while you're still in the field; the Unitech accountants will happily recharge them for free when you return to base. Similarly, there's absolutely no reason to return to base with toxic 'derms that are as stable as jello; use those expensive life support systems to rejuvenate your crews before ending the mission. On a mining mission? Well, Unitech taxes auto-mining pretty heavily so, if you're eager to save anywhere between 2000-6000 credits each mission, mine the excess ore before you leave the planet. Yeah, sure it's boring, but just think how many extra Neutron guns you'll be able to buy.

Well that's it for now. I outbid Rodriguez and Samuels for the chance to assault the main base in M138 and it's time to earn my pay. See you in hell!" ■

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by Steve Bauman

Getting over it

Trouble overcoming your gaming addiction? Here's the cure

You have a disease. You're a gamer. It makes your wrists ache, your eyes water and your breath quicken. You want to quit, but you can't.

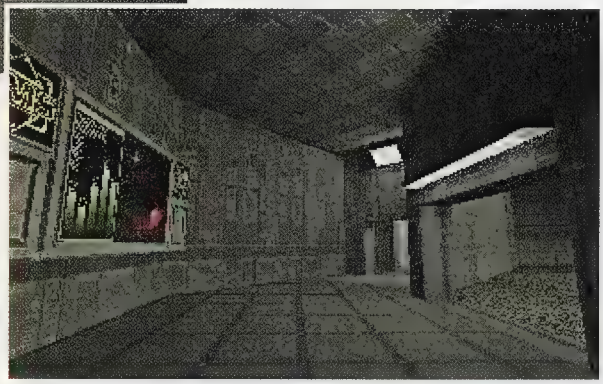
A gentleman named Mark E. Petersen authored this 10-step guide, designed to cure evildoers of masturbation (no connections between that and gaming will be attempted – well, outside of the introductory paragraph). Amazingly, it's flexible enough to serve as a guide for those of you who are into – nay deeply obsessed with – gaming. Some words have been changed to make it more amusing.

Steps in overcoming gaming

Never touch the intimate parts of your mouse, except during normal gaming processes. Avoid being alone as much as possible. Find good company and stay in this good company.
Don't play with yourself – play with friends via a network or modem.

If you are associated with other persons having this same problem, you must break off their friendship. Don't suppose that two of you will quit together; you never will. The problem must be taken out of your mind, for that is where it really exists.
Defies the standard "misery loves company" argument. Ah, screw 'em. If they're gamers, they must be weirdos and social deviants anyway.

Is Prey doomed, now that members of the team have left?



When you bathe, do not admire yourself in the mirror. Never stay in the bath more than five or six minutes – just long enough to bathe and dry and dress and then get out of the bathroom into a room where you will have some member of your family present.
Narcissistic gamers are a particularly vile bunch. As for the family member, well, that *is* a bit creepy, *non*?

When in bed, dress yourself for the night so securely that you cannot easily touch your joystick, and so that it will be difficult to remove these clothes.
A straight-jacket would be appropriate. Preferably a leather one.

This guy couldn't get over his gaming addiction

This guy needs a cold shower

If the temptation seems overpowering while you are in bed, get out of bed and go into the kitchen and fix yourself a snack.
Fairly self-explanatory. Make sure the meal is especially high in calories and fat; eventually, you won't be able to reach your desk from your chair (or you'll just die of a heart attack, thereby curing your addiction).

Never read computer game magazines. Never read about your problem.
So put down this article at once. Thank goodness you've already paid for it.

Put wholesome thoughts into your mind at all times…make a daily habit of reading at least one chapter of a Doom novel.
There's something especially poetic about this line from Book One, Chapter 3, Verse 22: "I started, shaking like a California earthquake. I was looking–at–a zombie… a freakin' zombie. I was crazy, buggin', freaked out like some hippie punk snot flying on belladonna."

Keep the problem out of your mind by not mentioning it ever – not in conversation with others, not in your prayers. Keep it out of your mind! Gaming is a sinful habit that robs one of the spirit, and creates guilt and emotional stress. It is not physically harmful unless practiced in the extreme. It is a habit that in no way expresses the proper use of the power given to man.
Not physically harmful?! – what about carpal-tunnel syndrome?

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***

Finally, we end with this. Romero leaves id. A bunch of guys leave 3D Realms' *Prey* team (see page 12). What's the story?

Moles "in the know" say it's merely egos running rampant. Romero didn't like the fact id limited his design of *Quake*, while the 3D Realms guys didn't like the fact that the *Duke Nukem* guys made a boatload of money. The more things change… next month: *Lifestyles of the Rich and Snotty.*

Tracer

Pressing <CTRL-SHIFT V> turns the virus off and on, while <CTRL-SHIFT G #> skips to level #.

Catfight

For those of you unfortunate enough to have bought this thing, here's a code to allow you to jump to the last fight. At the fighter selection screen, hold down AWDT and press <RETURN>. Battle Gene Simmons in makeup and drag. Just duck and kick and you'll easily defeat her/him/it. ■

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The Silencer is back

Crusader: No Regret

Origin

DOS

★★★★☆

The original *Crusader: No Remorse* is a classic; no matter how hardware and software improve, this is one game which should stand the test of time. The sequel gives players who loved the original more of the same in the *best* sense: more of the kind of play *Crusader* fans are happy to have, without any excessively ingenious new ideas introduced to clutter up a successful formula.

The story continues where the previous game left off, and serves the same purpose; basic background for what is at essence a simple action game. You're still a member of the Resistance, busy blowing up Security forces and doing your best not to hurt scientists and other non-combat personnel you encounter along the way. From time to time, your data link pops up video clips to help flesh out the premises of the story, and these are well-done; but they remain peripheral to the core of play.

With approximately the same depth and variety as the original, and approximately the same number of weapons and controls and options present, some gamers may be wondering where the effort went in putting together the game. The answer is clear once you start digging in: level and puzzle design, and character control. Without having to futz around with the game engine or the control and animation technology or graphics design too much, the implementers have obviously been given the chance to go to town setting up a panoply of traps, clever complications and neat control features for veterans of the game.

Newcomers to this game system may do well to pick up the original first, since *No Regret* is if anything tougher than the first installment. While the basic play techniques are the same – find access cards and power-ups, blow up things, turn knobs and levers to open doors and unleash surprises, and blow up things, talk to the odd NPC now and then, and blow up things – the traps and puzzles are often fiendish from the get-go.

The first impulse when playing is to jump right in with simple walk and shoot commands (as before, the keyboard works the best, though players with programmable joysticks like the Microsoft Game Pad – an excellent choice for this game, by the way – can put together optimal keystroke combos for more refined control); but this is a bad idea. Much practice should be taken with the variety of subtler performance moves available. These are as extensive now as those in any top-notch 3D fighting game on a Saturn or PlayStation, and are useful not only to impress onlookers as you play, but to get through the difficulties of many of the situations your character will find him- or herself in. For instance, you'll find crouching movement is the only way to avoid some weapons systems, while rolling and shooting may be the only technique you can use to avoid fire in some situations. Being able to choose which kind of movement you'll need to use quickly, without fumbling around for the right key combinations, is critical to success once you've expanded your repertoire of control.

The negatives for *No Regret* are minimal. It would be nice if The Silencer (your in-game character) were slightly more granular in movement control – he's still hanging off ledges which don't exist sometimes, or having trouble getting *just* the right angle to shoot out that security monitor – and, similarly, it would be useful if players had some control over the *pace* of gameplay as well as simply the sheer quantity of opposition (harder levels mean addition of newer, tougher opponents and weapons systems in the game rooms). It would be *great* if the most appropriate inventory item for the situation at hand were auto-prepared, so the player doesn't have to scroll frantically through inventory to get to that Spider Mine, dying before s/he's gotten a chance to use it *just* because it was buried behind the Energy Cubes, MedKits and VR Imager (or at least offer the chance to sort inventory so the right items are nearest to hand). And, finally, once we've moved to faster processing and next-gen vidcards, increasing to higher VESA resolutions could expand the opportunities for graphics and gameplay detail.

Make no mistake, though; *No Regret* is an amazingly good game, and – once again – leaves the player wanting even more. I hope The Silencer has a long, glorious history ahead of him. *–Steve Wartofsky*

Clockwise from left: This looks tricker than it really is. If you can't blow something up, there must be a quieter solution (switch) somewhere....; An early favorite – open the valve to freeze-dry the guard in the next room. Just watch yer step once you get there yourself!; Liar, liar, pants on fire; "Give me that access card or I'll install DirectX 2.0 on your PC!!"

Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels

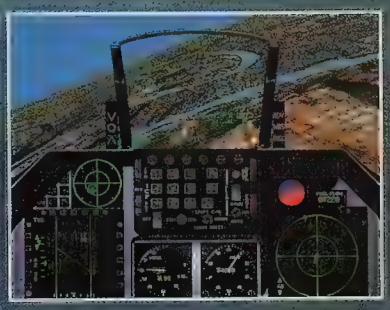
Electronic Arts

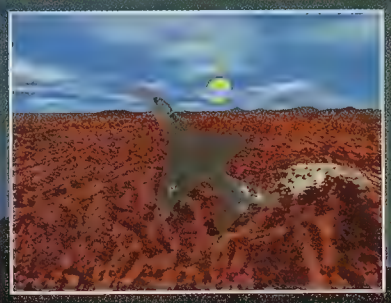
Windows 95

★★★★☆

An odd port-over from the 3DO due to its very un-console-like nature, *Space Hulk* fits very comfortably on the PC. Essentially a *Doom*-style game for strategy fans, this *Warhammer 40K* license is a lumberingly intense, dark, frightening and bristlingly violent first-person

THE ULTIMATE BATTLE





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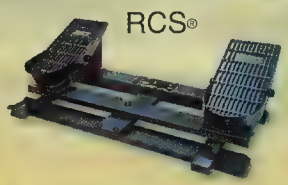

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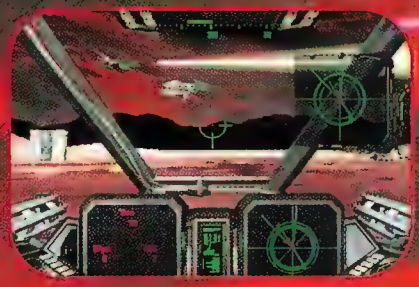

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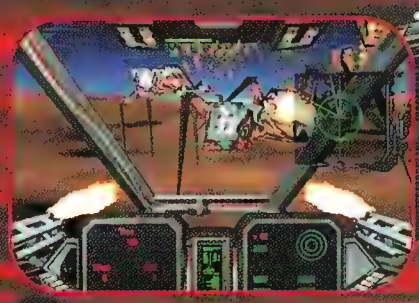

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▼ Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels

◄ Shellshock

▼ Tracer

shooter with all the atmosphere of *Aliens*. Placed aboard derelict, alien infested space craft, known as Space Hulks, you play the part of a Space Marine who must not only try to keep himself alive and blasting, but the members of his troop as well through good leadership and intelligent orders.

Orders are given to your troopers from an overhead tactical map and the game can, if you wish, even be played from this viewpoint – though most gamers will opt for the extremely in-your-face first-person viewpoint for their bughunts. *Space Hulk*, despite its low-resolution graphics, has a nicely 3D rendered look to it and all the monsters and fellow Space Marines look pretty good, though the close-up Purestrain Genestealer aliens take the award as one of the best looking monsters in a 3D shooter yet. Even better than the graphics are the sound effects, music and, especially, the voice-over communications of your Space Marine brethren – they warn you, keep you up to date on the situation of the mission and just generally help you out. A higher level of autonomous action on their part would have been nice though, especially given the extremely high difficulty level of the game.

The game offers a multitude of varying missions (choose from a full on, story driven campaign mode, or a horde of standalone missions) which require thought, patience, and quick action (no small feat), but it's not for those in search of *Doom* and *Quake*-like fast-paced, mindless action. These Space Marines wear bulky full body armor suits which force you to move at a slow determined pace and there isn't even a strafe option. A very noticeable flaw in the game is that the enemies tend to have a "sweet spot" kill zone, forcing you to shoot them dead center in the chest in order to down them in all the game's bloody glory (blood literally coats the walls here).

Aside from a difficulty level slider bar and an alternative soundtrack, the most notable distinction between the PC and 3DO version is the ten player network option. Now here's a game that would be great over a gaming network service. Ironically (especially given the fact that very few of us actually have access to a 10 player network), this Windows 95-only title has no modem options even though it comes with an extra multiplayer-only CD. It also could have used more in the way of networking missions as well, and a level editor would have been a perfect addition to this game. *Space Hulk* runs strictly from the CD with no install at all and uses DirectX drivers.

Despite its aged 3D engine (you won't be seeing any *Quake*-like structures in the game to be certain) and VGA graphics, *Space Hulk* is an extremely worthwhile addition to the library of those who want a first-person shooter that's more than simply mindless action. This is an intense, challenging, strategy-laden game with atmosphere as deep as any game on the market, and, on the whole, it's very, very good. *–Jason D'Aprile*

Shellshock

Eidos Interactive

DOS

★★☆☆☆

Stop me if you think you've heard this one before. It's New York in 1997 and all hell's broken loose. You are a member of "Da Wardenz," a peace-keeping force. You have a tank and you're going to use it, as you drive around towns blowing things up over the course of 25 missions. Sometimes you shoot vehicles. Other times you shoot buildings. You can even find power-ups after blowing things up. Mostly, you just shoot things while avoiding being shot. Complete a mission and you get money to upgrade the armor and weapons and your tank. In between missions you can talk to your fellow Wardenz, who rap eloquently… aarrgghhh. Enough.

That's the premise of Eidos' *Shellshock*, the first game to feature African-American characters throughout. You've got to love a game with a hip-hop soundtrack by legendary rap star/San Francisco 49'er/eternally injured William "Bar None" Floyd. Or maybe not. While it's refreshing to see minorities being featured so prominently in any game, it's somewhat depressing to see them wallowing in the street stereotypes you find here. "Yo, man, we wit da Wardenz."

But anyway, you drive a tank which handles like a guy running around with a shotgun, while dodging other tanks firing projectiles which you can dodge with your nimble tank. You go through somewhat monochromatic environments that aren't particularly interesting looking, and watch lots of really cool explosions. Yeah, it's tank *Doom*. Yeah, it's 3D (OK, not great 3D, but still 3D). Yeah, it's rather dull, unoriginal and unexciting, but if you haven't purchased the other 384 of these 3D shooter things this year, you may have some fun. There's plenty of stuff to blow-up. Most of us will be bored and shell-shocked over the mediocrity of it all.

–Steve Bauman

Tracer

7th Level

Windows 95

★★½☆☆

It's pretty tough to come up with an original idea any more. It seems like every game type's been done, and done again in high-resolution, and done again in 3D… etc. 7th Level's *Tracer* is a good example. On first impression, you're thinking, "Hey, this is really interesting and unique." By the second you're going, "Hmm, I know this, but from where…," and by the third you're thinking, "Hey, it's LucasArts' *Pipe Dream* in 3D." So much for originality.

As in that oldie, you must move around a square-ish area while being chased by something. The original used the old pipe metaphor (connect pipes while keeping them from spilling their fluid – no, it wasn't an adult game), while this one dredges up the old cyberpunk premise. You're in cyberspace being chased by the Tracer virus; if it catches you, you're fried.

It ain't exactly *Snow Crash*, but it is moder-

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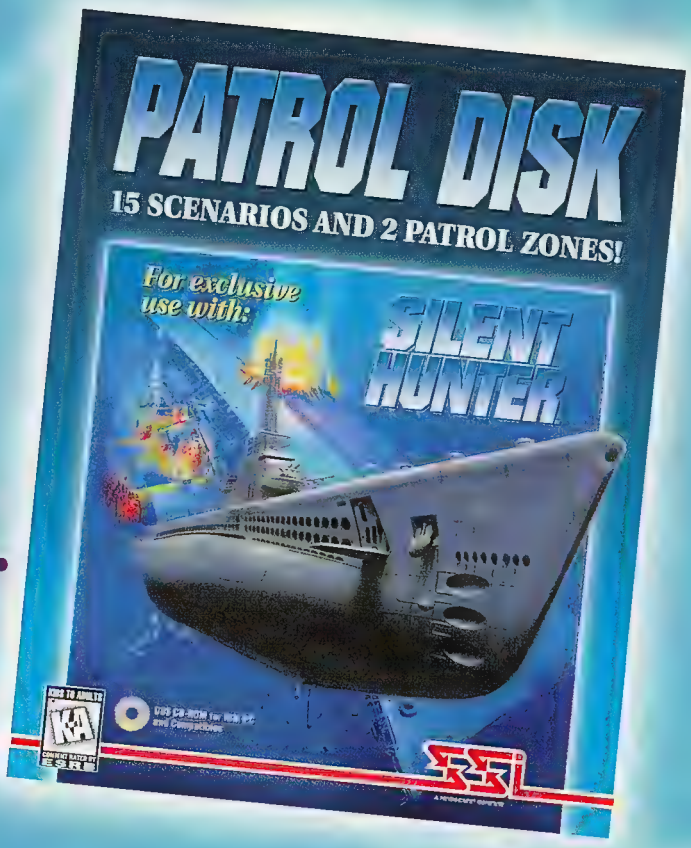

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ately interesting – again, for a while. Jump around a grid by placing colored pads on the ground in front of you. You have a limited number of these, and various power-ups can get you more of them or give you special powers. Meanwhile, the Tracer virus eats away on the pads you've left behind – if it reaches you, you're toast (or ether, or ethernet, or something).

As far as game play goes, this is a pretty hard game, even on the easiest levels. The keyboard interface is a bit awkward, and it can be difficult figuring out what direction your little 3D polygonal character is facing. Visually, though, the game is superb, with a true-3D engine which shows off the rendering speed (or lack thereof) of your mighty machine. The always popular "pulsing techno-soundtrack®" (sampled as background music on our cover CD) is your accompaniment throughout.

Overall, there are no real problems with *Tracer*. It's jut not that inspiring. It's not the sort of game you think about playing at any time, though with future network play supplemented by an included level editor, it may have a future online. *–Steve Bauman*

◀ AstroRock

▲ Catfight

◀ Island Peril

AstroRock

Atlantean Interactive

DOS, Windows 95, Macintosh

★★★☆☆

In the beginning, and we're talking *way* back in the beginning, in comp-sci labs at MIT and other bastions of geek-dom, there was *Space War*. And the hackers looked upon it, and they saw it was good, and thus was a classic was born. Fast forward a dozen years or so and *Asteroids* took arcades by storm.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. *AstroRock* is *Asteroids* for the '90's, and that's no bad thing. Forget the inane plot – just configure your controls and jump in. Turn, thrust, shields, and two fire keys are all you need to worry about.

High-resolution graphics are an incredible improvement over the vector graphics of old. Power-ups (shields, armor, new weapons and free ships) are found inside the rocks, and a multitude of enemies are now present to make your life miserable. Fight through level after level of mayhem (no video interludes or other fluff to trouble you) and when you die, the highest level visited gets written to your config file; you can start from that level in the future. When you get bored with creaming the computer, and assuming you're running the Windows 95 version, you can go head to head with a buddy via modem or up to eight players can mix it up via LAN.

One gripe: a full install of the game (the disk is a Windows 95/DOS/MacOS hybrid) takes 44 megs or so of hard disk space. Of this, approximately 4 megs is game, and 40 megs is a huge file for the digitizied music, and the DOS version *must* be fully installed to your drive.

But what do you want for under $30? This is retro-gaming at its best…the type of game that has you shaking out your cramping wrists and hands between levels, but no matter how bad it hurts, you just have to get to

Island Peril

Atlantean Interactive

DOS

½☆☆☆☆

There's a certain tinge of excitement a game reviewer feels when a new package arrives in the mail. And when the package says Atlantean Interactive, you know you're in for a truly campy treat.

Their latest is no exception. *Island Peril* is a *Doom* clone of a different sort. It features a brilliant story acted out with much gusto and a flair for drama (and regular readers will be thrilled to hear that the guy who starred in *Alley Cats*, the best strip bowling game on the market, can still find work). You're Dick Danger, D.A., and your bikini-clad girlfriend has been captured by the Evil Boss (that's E.B. to you and me). You must kill a bunch of things and sit through the worst video ever created for a computer game until you get the final confrontation, where… you'll just have to play to find out.

There are some amazing features implemented here that leave you wondering why every 3D game designer has yet to adopt. There's the legendary "drop to the floor" – why have the player fall when we can have them warp to ground level? There's the soon-to-be-ubiquitous "walkthrough villain," whereby you can walk right through the bad guys. There's the "four-handed" interface, necessary to use the bizarre keyboard/mouse/joystick game interface. There's the "3D engine" which allows you to get totally immersed in these lifelike environments (that rival *Wolfenstein 3D* for complexity and realism). There's the sound, oh the sound. The cheesy grade-Z porn background music during the video.

There's the cackle repeated over and over, over and over, over and over… Oh, enough already.

In case you wondered, this is pretty much the worst game to grace the hard drive in a long time… *–S. B.*

Catfight

Atlantean Interactive

Windows

☆☆☆☆☆

… until *Catfight* clawed its way out of the software gutter.

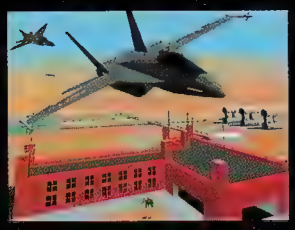
Dubbed "The Ultimate Female Fighting Game from Atlantean Interactive" (it is, after all, the *only* female fighting game from Atlantean), *Catfight* is *Mortal Kombat* minus any male fighters. And gameplay. And fun.

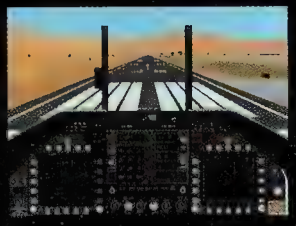
Just as a quick example of the level of thought that went into the design, the game has two difficulty levels, "Brain Dead," where, get this, the computer doesn't fight back at all (useful for, well, nothing at all), and "Butt-kicker," (huh huh, he said butt) where the computer appears to be incredibly good until you realize that: 1. The response time for your controls is pathetic; and 2. All you have to do is stay in a crouch and kick repeatedly to defeat your opponents with ease (Hello, playtesters? Ever hear of play balancing?).

Catfight enters entirely new realms of badness. Aside from the control problems, you have bad gameplay, bad animation, bad-looking characters, bad background graphics, bad background music and bad sound effects. Which makes for a pretty bad game. Too bad there's no cheesy video to make fun of.
If you're not paying attention, *Catfight* can be summarized thusly:
Worst moment: Double-clicking on the "Install" icon.
Bizarre moment: The final battle against the boss fighter, who looks like Gene Simmons of Kiss in full makeup and full drag (there's nothing quite like cross-dressing Kabuki bondage).
Best moment: Removing the shortcut from the "Start" menu. *–S. B.*

REACH OUT AND TORCH SOMEONE.

F/A-18 HORNET





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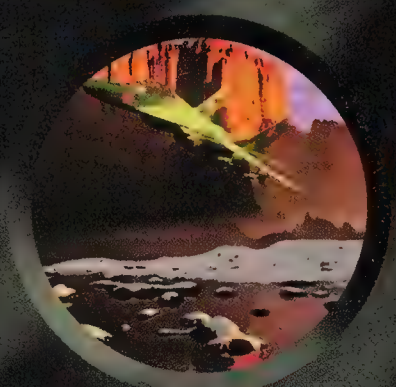

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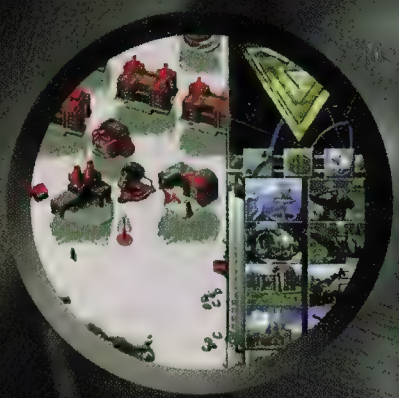

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by Cindy Yans

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"Whadda yoo, stoopid?" Ever hear *that* from anyone? Like the time you loaned $200 to that guy at the pay toilet in the bus depot...or the time you mixed up your Preparation H with the Rogaine. "Whadda yoo, *stoopid?*"(accompanied by a wallop upside da haid).

No one likes to feel stoop...er, stupid, but it's fun to give it a try every now and again. Depending upon the particular manifestation of your intelligence, Simon and Schuster's "Ultimate IQ Challenge" *Brainstorm!* may keep you coming back for more, or cause you to run screaming in the other direction. I don't believe there's any middle ground in this case.

The product is a complication, er, *compilation* (Freudian typo left in) of IQ type puzzles and brain teasers, and an encyclopedic look at the sections of the brain and their functions. After a glimpse at the "Gray Matters" informational section, I said, "Blech, this is not a game," (although nicely presented in 3D visuals accompanied by in-depth audio dissertations and factoids), and moved on to the more important business of puzzle solving. A MENSA application and section 1 of the SAT (that's Scholastic Aptitude Test for those lucky enough not to know) rolled into one, *Brainstorm!* is guaranteed to make you pump those neurons which, if out of shape, might require a post-workout hot bath and heating pad (in-shape neurons can simply stretch out and head for the juice bar).

The mainstay of the game is a barrage of non-cultural, non-gender-specific, non-language-specific, non-numeric puzzles, many of which you will have seen before – or at least you will have seen these *types* of puzzles before, as no one to my knowledge is able to escape at least *some* IQ testing. "Mentally fold this shape into a three dimensional object. Which of the following objects is the possible result? A only; B only; A and B; C; all of the above; none of the above; not enough information to answer this question." If you've already broken into a sweat, you probably don't want to play *Brainstorm!* But if you just *love* these types of puzzles (and I do), then you'll probably enjoy the product immensely. Many years of singing "One of these things is not like the others..." will have prepared you for the challenges of object trait association, and love of progressions and sets will also help out.

Other brain teasers include rebuses and brain teasing word problems. Rebuses, as you may recall, are textual and/or graphical literal or pictorial representations of well known phrases. AIR OOOO S AIR OOOO S AIR

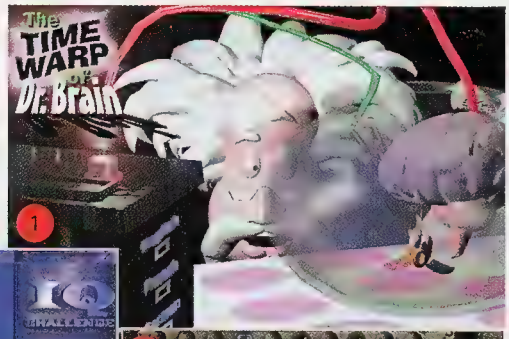
[1] All games should feature at least one bilingual guppy

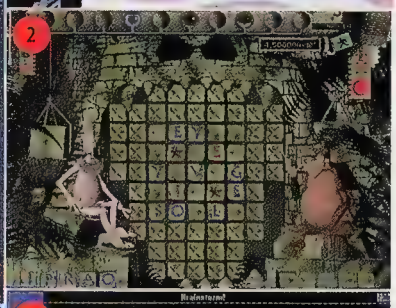
[2] Congo meets Threepwood?

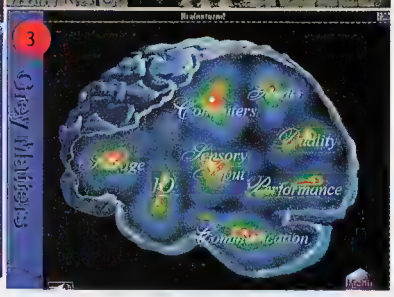
[3] All those words and letters are really in there, too. Honest!

[4] And there's one more wild card left on the board

[5] This is enough to make even the fully functional scurry







OOOO (or Air O's S Air O's S Air O's) representing "A rose is a rose is a rose..." is an example. And it's even *more* exciting if it appears beneath a grid of numbers and pairs of washer-dryers and trips to Maui...

As for word problems, one coworker actually stood behind me, eyes a-sparkle, stating with genuine fervor and glee, "Train A is 80 feet long and leaves Chicago at 8:00 am, traveling at 78 mph, headed for Boston. Train B, 120 feet long, leaves Boston at 8:20 am...blah blah blah." It's a love-or-hate relationship, I tell you.

The non-anything-specific puzzles may be played in a timed environment with immediate verbal feedback about correct solutions, or against the clock under simulated formal test conditions. All that's missing is the proctor and the number 2 pencil – the one that's guaranteed to break if you didn't bring five more of them.

And for the synapses in need of a lighter workout or for those simply in training, Neuron Boot Camp is being announced by the king-of-capitalizing-on-a-lucrative-thing-and-what's-wrong-with-that-anyway?: Sierra On-Line. Dr. Brain returns in his fourth adventure, *The Time Warp of Dr. Brain,* featuring 10 unique puzzle areas which are drawn from the Triune Brain Concept, a theory which indicates that there are 10 levels of intelligence, each stemming from basic instincts such as survival to more complex concepts of futuristic hypotheses.

The good doctor's realization of these areas is made possible by a time machine in which he is able to visit 10 different time periods, each of which...well, you get the picture. In the first area, Primordial Soup, you are a single celled organism fighting for survival. Oooh, toss those flagella, baby.

The game takes *The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain* a step further, expanding upon several of its original regions. The music region (one of my favorites), for example, now includes not only melody but orchestral arrangement. What was once Pentode is now Monkey See Monkey Do, where the ultimate goal is to learn sign language.

If it manages to even approach the quality of its predecessor, *Time Warp* will be a must-do for the holiday season. Maybe this time they'll put it out with the Total and the Grape Nuts, as well as with the Lucky Charms and Fruity Pebbles... ■

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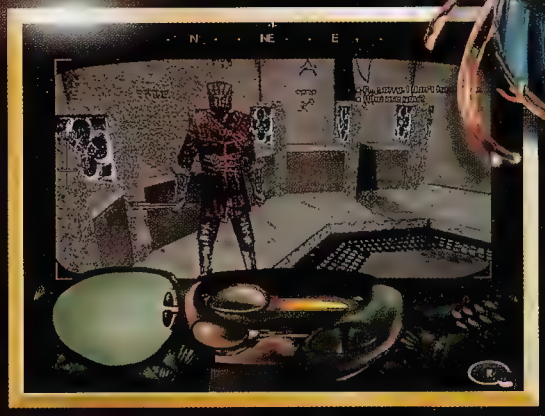

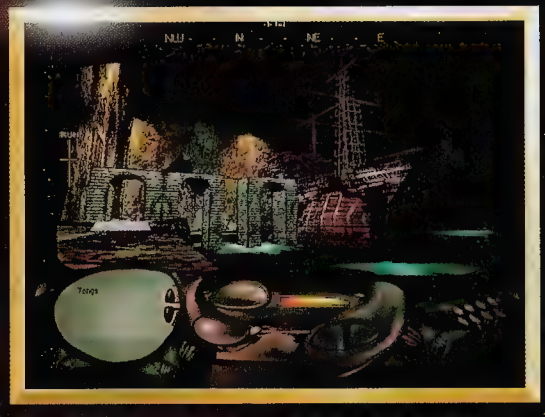

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TEEN AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Mac OS

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

by Andy Backer

Anvil assessments and analysis

Ol' Unca Andy's mythical Inn and spell of last resort for solving adventure puzzles. If all else fails, just re-boot ! Heh-heh...

Toaster is back and insists on continuing the story Bewildered has been telling the past few months.

The dragon who thought he was Bogart

Of all the treasure caves in all the mountain ranges of the world, why did she have to fly into mine?

Beata broke my heart in Krakow, but now looked at me with smoldering eyes and hummed our song.

"Stop that humming, " I said.

"Why, Rick?"

"See the sign? No humming."

"Why, Rick, why?"

I heard a rumble... "Cave-in!" Somehow, I managed to escape, but Beata is dead and buried, and will never hum again.

Oh, well. We'll always have Krakow.

Hot & Not

I laughed my way through the controversial adventure from 7th Level: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail.* The puzzles are the scavenger hunt kind. If you can get past the killer rabbit, a messenger at the Bridge of Death will tell you what the ten important objects are. If you find all ten but don't know where they go, the messenger reappears with the information after you've died attempting to cross the Bridge a third time.

Wizardry Gold was the hottest role playing game during August, and *The Pandora Directive* the hottest adventure.

Anvil of Dawn (part three)

This large role playing game was one of the best of last year.

Sunken Ship Surprises

The eastern most room of the first level contains the octopus-like demon that wants eight hearts of undead sailors. In exchange he'll give you riddles.

Anchor switches open first level doors when they are pulled. Two first level doors are opened by a pressure plate between them. Put a bag on rocks on it to enter the opposite door. Both rooms have a teleporter, a wall switch and two pebbles on the floor. Get the pebbles, pull the switch, enter the teleporter and put a pebble on each pressure plate. Then teleport to the hall. You can now get into the remaining four rooms on the first level. Hang on to the Wyvern's blood.

Upstairs is an illusionary wall near the area where a rolling rock is standing. Enter and throw the switch, opening up a hidden room to the far east. Midship, push the four blocks onto the four plates in each corner. This opens a door to the north that leads to the Captain's Quarters.

Step on the pressure plate in the CQ. A wall to the north opens. Go into the south room, pull the wall switch. Do the same to the north room and a west wall will start to open and close. Enter and exchange your mail for the shell armor.

After you give the hearts to the demon, go back to the Water Labyrinth and use the exit in the north east corner to get to Underground City.

Those Underground City blues

There are two levels: a huge main level and a small mine level which has the Heartstone. The Sol Disc and Trumpet of Earthen Quake are on the first level.

Use the stone ankh with the circular hole. Go to the northeast door with the wall switch, and throw it. Step on the pressure plate four times to open the other doors.

Talk to the sleepy imp then leave the room and shut the door. Now, without entering the room again, step on the plate and open the door. Use the hourglass to stop time. Enter the room and you should see the imp sleeping with a thought bubble over his head. Wait for the time spell to wear off and you will learn the spell of Fire Haven.

Slightly west of the south exit is a house with two closed doors and a stone block. Destroy the block with your sword and the doors will open.

Before entering the mine, talk to the little girl on level one. Use the Heavenly Mend spell to clear the rubble in the mine. Talk to the miner and he will give you a tool to help you find the Heartstone.

Bye for now

More next month. In the meantime, write to Unca at 71202,3451 on CompuServe or 71202.3451@compuserve.com

[1] I laughed my way through the controversial adventure from 7th Level: Monty Python and the Holy Grail

Anvil of Dawn:

[2] The eastern most room contains the octopus like demon the wizard told you about

[3] The demon wants eight hearts, which you get by killing these undead sailors

[4] Talk to the miner and he will give you a tool to help you find the Heartstone

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Modes of
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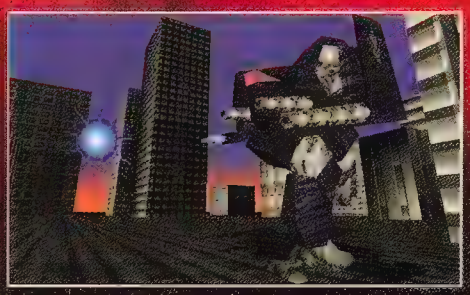

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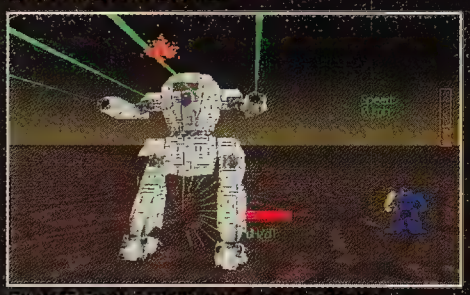
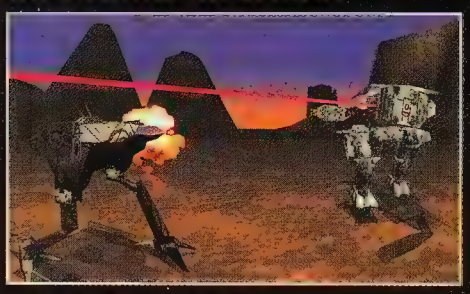


CUSTOMIZE YOUR ARSENAL WITH LETHAL WEAPONRY



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A breath of fresh air

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL

Albion

Blue Byte Software

DOS

★★★★☆

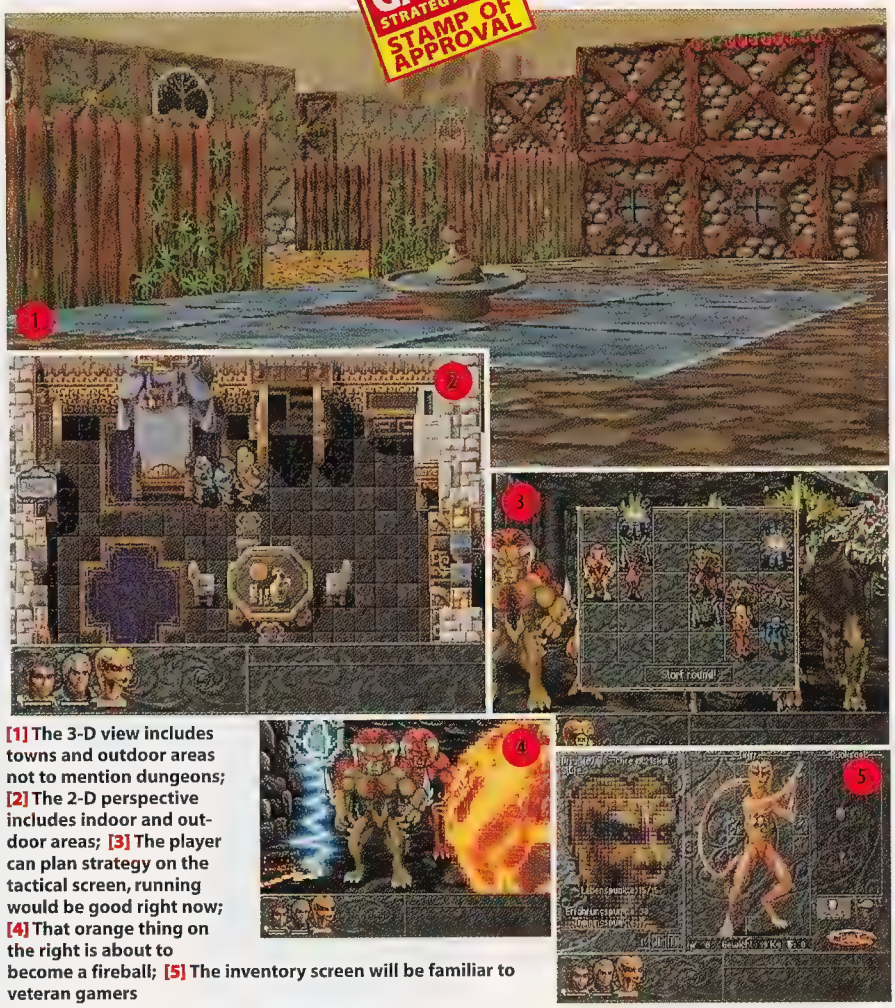
Scan any on-line service in their games section and you'll find a ton of posts by persons complaining about the lack of quality of current role playing games. It seems like the market has been taken over by first-person, single character shooters disguised as RPGs with rudimentary skill development and puzzles thrown in as window dressing. Against this growing trend in the industry Blue Byte throws down a worthy gauntlet. Their *Albion* is one of the most unique and refreshing RPGs seen in quite a while.

The game is unique because it uses a combination of sci-fi and fantasy myths for its storyline. It pulls off the theme of scientifically advanced humans crash landing on a primitive magic-rich planet very well. Gone are dwarves, elves, and dragons. They're replaced by Iskai, Celts (?!), Mahinos, and Kamulos which are at once both familiar and innovative. The game boasts a 150,000 word storyline with enough twists to almost qualify as an adventure game. Communication occurs with a user-friendly, flexible key-word system. Veteran Avatars of the *Ultima* series will feel right at home. Those looking for CD-gloss may be disappointed as almost all the dialogue is conveyed with simple text, not digital speech.

Albion uses a combination of 2D isometric perspective and a 3D smooth scrolling view. The 3D view is not limited to dungeon crawling but also includes town exploration and open air environments. This smooth scrolling view although rendered in low resolution is attractive and varied. It includes the prerequisite abilities of being able to look up and down. There's a helpful feature of turning an even 90 or 180 degrees with a mouse click. Automapping is available. The 2D perspective occurs in larger areas of exploration and offers a welcomed change of pace from a total first person RPG.

Albion is a multi-character RPG. Characters are not generated but assigned as part of the game's story line. The player starts off taking the roll of Tom Driscoll, hot-shot pilot with a conscience, but will soon find other interesting humanoids and semi-humanoids joining his party. The game uses a combination of level and skill advancement as the characters gain experience. Attributes include standard variants on strength, dexterity and intelligence. Skills are primarily combat oriented.

Combat occurs in two stages. First, the player plans actions for each of the characters on a 5x6 square tactical grid. The actions are then automatically executed in 3D perspective. The player can pick a number of detail settings for combat and spell visuals. The spell effects are entertaining, with magical power often shown gathering in front of the party then blasting upon their adversaries. The previous round's commands are held in memory so there's no need to tediously re-enter them in extended battles.



[1] The 3-D view includes towns and outdoor areas not to mention dungeons; [2] The 2-D perspective includes indoor and outdoor areas; [3] The player can plan strategy on the tactical screen, running would be good right now; [4] That orange thing on the right is about to become a fireball; [5] The inventory screen will be familiar to veteran gamers

This combat system works extremely well. It is the answer to the prayers of many role-players who have despaired of the blithe of real-time combat engines currently on the market. The only aspect that was disappointing was the apparent inability of individual characters to advance forward and execute pincer movements upon hapless enemies.

There are 52 magical spells divided into four realms, each realm being the specialty of a different race. The spells primarily provide combat, healing, and utility functions. Two of the more interesting are Fungification which launches a fungus attack, and Goddess' Wrath, which spectacularly destroys all enemies in a battle. There are plenty of magical objects to aid the party, and also cursed items the player must be wary of impulsively equipping.

The game includes one noteworthy feature from the past, a real hard copy manual! There's a growing trend in the industry to provide little more than a Windows help file as documentation. The inclusion of a hard manual that can be savored away from the monitor makes learning the game so much easier than wading through hyper-links and search functions. Blue Byte deserves much praise in bucking this growing industry trend.

Albion is a breath of fresh air for the RPG crowd. It offers something old, something new as the cliché goes. Though it may not offer enough CD-chrome to impress a new generation of SVGA indoctrinated gamers, those who cut their teeth on the likes of *Might and Magic*, *Wizardry*, and *Ultima* may find that the future looks a little brighter because of this latest offering from Blue Byte.

–Chuck Klimushyn

Don't Quit Your Day Job

Philips Media

Windows

★☆☆☆☆

"Don't Quit Your Day Job is fresh, new, twisted, cutting edge and whatever else they asked me to say," stated Michael Richards (Kramer of *Seinfeld*) – at gunpoint, perhaps? Or heavily bribed?

When first I laid eyes on this game in its pre-release stages, I thought, "How brave is *this*? A multimedia computer game based solely on stand-up comedy – a more subjective medium may not exist in the world of entertainment...Well, risk-taking is the basis of many successes in life." And I wished them the best. Then a few months later, *Day Job* arrived at the office in its final shrink wrap leotard.

It is my worst fear realized. This insipid game casts you as a talent scout for the late night hit *The Johnny K. Show*. You begin by choosing one of two comics, waitress Shirley Felcker (she's willing to Felck her way to the top), or doorman Dolan Delatorre (he's from New Yawk). Both work at the famous Improv comedy club in Los Angeles; your mission is to ensure that your client is chosen for a stand-up spot at the club. The lucky comic who appears will win a spot on *The Johnny K. Show*, and if it happens to be your client, you win the game. It's that simple...or should I say, simplistic?

Boringly rendered in 3D with FMV windows, the game features a number of performances by stand-up comics of today and tomorrow (?), accessible by clicking on one of their photos on the wall, or foisted upon us in other nefarious ways. Most of them leave me stone-faced or cringing. A handful of characters (including your potential clients) are available to interact with, to advance the non-story. Talking to the right person at the right time will enable you to gain an item for your briefcase – perhaps to give to another character, perhaps not...and each correct choice will add another piece to a ticket stub which appears miraculously. The stub will eventually grow into an entire ticket, at which point the game is complete.

Talking to the wrong person at the right time – or the right person at the wrong time – will send you whirling down the flusher to Hell's Basement, a place with many doors opening to many non-challenges (bad arcade puzzles, bad word puzzles, inane and pointless situations, etc.). It's hard to say whether it's worth solving anything which takes you back to the club, however.

Bad acting, bad comedy (with a few exceptions), a bad marriage of FMV to the rendered Improv backgrounds, Steve Allen in the corner – all point to a generally sad addition to the retail shelf. The one star is for the 360-degree engine and the aforementioned exceptions. Try it if you dare. *–Cindy Yans*

▲ Don't Quit Your Day Job

▼ Amber Journeys Beyond

Amber Journeys Beyond

Changeling

Macintosh

★★★★½

Somewhere back in Introduction to Art 101 I remember learning about something called minimalism. The art of minimalism implies using the least amount of a chosen medium to convey the maximum emotional impact. *Amber* is so good at using understated effects to scare the pants off the player, it could well end up being required study in colleges across the country!

Amber is an adventure game using photo-realistic graphics and staggered movement much like that other world famous adventure title starting with the letter *M*. The game begins with the player receiving voice e-mail from a friend and employer asking him to check up on a colleague, Dr. Rosanne Westbridge. Roxy, as she's referred to in the game, is the CEO of BIO-PSI, which is developing equipment to monitor paranormal activity. Roxy has been testing the prototypes of this equipment at a psionicly-active (read haunted) house she evidently bought for kicks. From here the credits roll as the player drives along winding country roads. As the apparent destination is reached, a spectral form of lights cross the road and causes the player's car to swerve, ending up with the car in a small pond. The credits finish as air bubbles rise through the water and the player begins game play, looking up at the edge of a dock.

Less-is-more is the rule in the game. Commands are limited to clicking in the four cardinal directions, with occasional off-center angles for movement. To-be-used items in the game are simply clicked on. Active areas of the rooms are identified by the cursor changing into a question mark. Though there are many active spots in each room, they generally end up being what would actually be expected in a residential home, such as closets with clothes and cabinets with cups. Sound effects are sparse, but this magnifies their impact. There's no soundtrack within the game; most exploration takes place in silence. Er...that's except when a simple sound like the creaking of a floorboard will startle the player straight through the roof! Visually there's little of the photo-realistic blood and gore which seems to be the main selling point of so many forgettable adventure games currently on the market. Still, the impact on the player's heart rate of an invisible finger writing "Join Me" on a bathroom mirror puts these other gore-fests to shame.

Amber parallels the story development of the best horror and mystery novels. The game will oh- so-slowly increase in tension and suspense. The player will feel the knot in his stomach grow as events unfold, much like a mainspring being wound ever more tightly. By the time I actually had my first encounter with the home's posthumous residents, the gasp I let out was almost a welcomed relief. The player will be well into the first of the two CD's before even finding out the meaning of the word Amber.

The game's puzzles vary from easy to moderate in difficulty. Most involve locating various parts of equipment to activate the prototype psychic detection equipment. There are also many feints, where the player will observe an item or picture and feel that it is somehow important to the storyline but later find it is actually irrelevant. The house is initially found dark, with ominous shadows cast from red flood lights. Locating the main power switch is not obvious and the player will feel quite a triumph when the switch is found and the lights come on.

The game draws heavily on current metaphysical terminology. New Agers and *X-Files* devotees will know what abbreviations like OBE and NDE mean, but others may want to pick up a primer at their nearest psychic bookfair. Even fewer of us may utter a knowing chuckle from noticing Roxy's doctorate degree is from Miskatonic University.

The bad news about *Amber* is that the game is currently a Macintosh-only title. The majority of adventure game fans will have to wait a while before the game makes it's way to a Windows 95 version. This is an unfortunate event. Changeling and Hue Forest Entertainment have delivered an understated gem that should not be overlooked!

–Chuck Klimushyn

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TEEN

The Pandora Directive

You picked the wrong PI to screw with today, pal

Day One: The search for Malloy

Whooeey! Fitzpatrick gave me four thousand bucks as a retainer to find Thomas Malloy! Now I can pay back Nilo, Rook, Louie, the Electronic Shop and still be able to treat Chelsea to a birthday drink. Maybe I'll even be able to buy something to eat!

Good thoughts, Tex, but first examine all your inventory items and the items in the three connected rooms of your apartment. While exploring don't forget to sometimes stand on your tiptoes (Shift) and look down on shelves, and open drawers. Remember to get down on your belly (Ctrl) and look up at things from a rat's point of view, too.

Okay, I got my jackknife, the bill from the Electronic Shop, and the newspaper clipping of the cop. Then I took the back way out of my office to Chelsea's newsstand across the street. I was humble and apologetic and asked her out. I played down the date aspect of the invitation and she accepted. I've got a date at eight for dinner at her apartment!

I went to the lobby of the Ritz and paid Nilo and then gave him another hundred for information. Found out that Malloy had stayed in room A on the first floor. However, the door was locked. After looking at the new code lock system, I went back to Nilo and pleaded with him to give me the code. I used it to open the door. I remember walking in and then nothing.

You were blackjacked. Don't worry about it, though. You did everything you needed to on the first day. On the Game Players level there's also a crossword puzzle in the lobby of the Ritz.

Day Two: Ladies in Waiting

Oh, my aching head! I was out for sixteen hours! Whoever conked my noggin missed a few items in his search of the room, however. I found a pawn ticket, an Acme Warehouse business card, a letter written in some strange language, an invitation to visit a cabin outside of San Francisco, a photo of Malloy, a perfumed scarf and a book.

I paid Louie (at the Brew and Stew) the two hundred I owed him and found out that the language the strange letter was written in was Yucatec. Louie constantly surprises me. He also told me that the scarf belonged to the girl who sang at the Flamingo, a new night club in the neighborhood. I went to Rook's, paid him his three hundred, and was able to turn in the pawn ticket (and some cash) for a mysterious black dagger. Louie also had a Yucatec Made Easy book he sold me so I could translate my letter.

The corporate executive who thought he was Bogart

Finally! A date with Chelsea

I took the alley exit from Rook's and decided to look for some spare cash in the sewer. Drug dealers often used the place. I found a few bills and a chisel. I paid my bill at the Electronic Shop, found a letter and some cash by the mailbox, which I mailed. Conscience doth make cowards of us all.

Rusty's Clown Shop was locked up tight. I went across the street to check out The Slice of Heaven and found an alley where Sal had hidden a bottle of scotch. I checked out the Flamingo, but couldn't get in. I looked at the sign and saw that a Luci Luv sang there. Strange. Louie said the singer's name was Emily. I went to Coit Tower. Clint gave me the back door key to the Flamingo. Nearby, in another previously undiscovered alley I found the Reverend Gary. He recognized Malloy from the newspaper photo and gave me a key in exchange for the bottle of scotch.

On Day Two, first talk to Louie

I opened up Acme's with the key and used an electric pulley to lift and open a crate addressed to Malloy. The peg leg nearby helped. Inside and under the crate were several items.

I then went to the cabin outside of San Francisco.

Use the travel map and click on North America to bring up the map with the cabin.

Inside the cabin was a CD and a crumpled sheet of puzzle instructions. I used the CD on the laptop in my computer room and solved the color puzzle (place the four blue squares first, with no square on the same plane, horizontal or vertical). Now I had access to the rest of the information on the CD and the code for the code locked door in the cabin.

I opened that door and found a roll of film for the projector (and a pull down

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movie screen). What a movie! Oh, I also found a body under the floor board.

I went back to Chandler street and opened the back door to the Flamingo. I met Gus Leach and returned his key and Emily's scarf. There was an antenna in his trash can beside the back door.

After all this I finally went to Chelsea's apartment to apologize for breaking our date. She forgave me when I showed her the bump on my head. We went to the Flamingo to celebrate her birthday but quickly had a tiff and she left. I managed to sneak upstairs to talk to Luci Luv and get pieces of a warning note sent to her.

Both the Entertainment and Game Players level seem to play exactly the same on Day Two.

Day Three: The Black Arrow Killer

I pieced together Emily's message and took it to Police Headquarters. I asked Mac Malden about Rusty's and sure enough he had the key and gave it to me. He also told me about the Black Arrow killer. I went back to Chandler and used Mac's key to open the cop lock. Trial and error soon broke down the code of the puzzle attached to the lock and I was able to find a lever on the floor that opened a secret passage. The passage led to the roof. The Water Tower had a Meister lock I needed a key to open.

I made the rounds of my sources, Louie first, and when I asked him about the Black Arrow killer he said it was in the papers and sent me to Rook. Rook said that the bums would take the old newspapers. I checked the trash cans in the alley and sure enough found a paper. There was an article about the Black Arrow killer. I talked to Rook about the reporter (Lucia Pernell) and he just happened to have her business card.

So, I gave her a buzz and arranged a meeting. She told me about the murder of a Sandra Collins. Back at my office I noticed a stalker on Rusty's roof. I dashed over too late to find him, but did find his jacket. Inside was a cuff-link and pieces of a photo. I pieced the Autotech photo together and bought the Visual Analyzing Apparatus at the Electronic Shop and used it on the photo to get the address.

Unfortunately, I couldn't get in without a pass. On a hunch I called Lucy and asked her about Sandra. She gave me her address and I was able to find an Autotech security pass there.

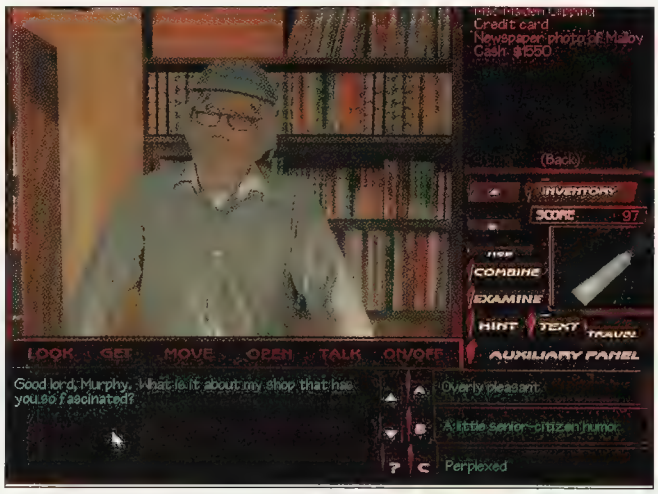
There was a Visitor's pass laying on the floor. I slid open the security window and saw a clipboard I couldn't quite reach. I searched the lobby and found a hairbrush and a curtain cord that I was able to combine and that did the trick! The clipboard revealed that the pass had a code. I was then able to open the door into the next section.

The Game Players level adds a security guard in the next section. Hide in the closet. There are items inside that when combined with a bucket of water (along with turning on an alarm) will make things slippery.

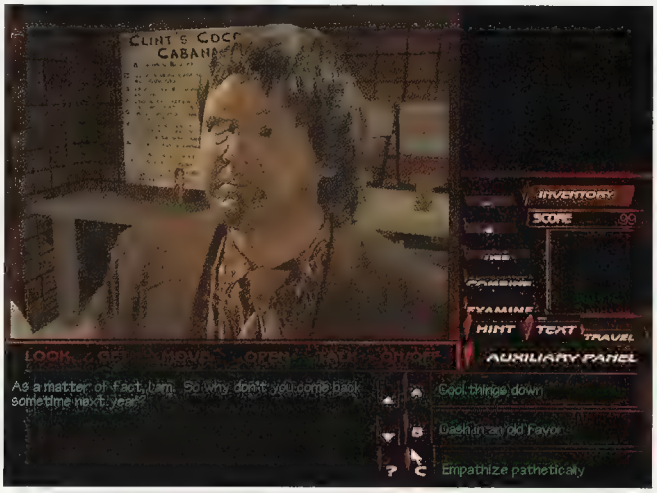
Dag Horton's room had a number of helpful items including a Meister lock key and a file-cabinet key. There was also a sticky note with Gary Lee's name on it, along with evidence that old Dag was a killer.

I left Autotech and asked Reverend Lee about Dag and then climbed the water tower on Rusty's roof. I looked through the view-finder of the binoculars and saw the killer waiting for Emily.

After another mad dash I was able to save Emily but Dag got away. I asked Rook if he had seen him and he mentioned the roof. I went back to the roof and saw the killer. I got down low, waited till his back was turned and ran down the steps and hid behind the air conditioning unit. When he turned away again I made my move.



After Louie, go see Rook



After Rook, visit Clint and get Gus's key

Return the key to Gus

Day Four: Out of the Past

After a mysterious lady talked to Mac at the police station I was set free. Back in the office I got a call from Lucia and Chelsea. Went to the Flamingo. Talked to Emily and Gus about the brown paper wrapper on the package Dag stole. Found the wrapper in the alley. Had to stand on the fire escape to get it with the help of an antenna. Ran it through the photo analyzer and found the post office number.

Went to Rusty's roof to find what Dag had dropped during our fight. It was an electronic tracker. I used it to find Emily's puzzle box that was hidden in the sewers. The bomb attached was easy to deactivate once I figured out that I had to leave an equal number of red and green photons after I operated the shuttle.

Transfer the red cell and two red photons, then the green cell and two green photons. Then the green cell and one red photon, the red cell and one green photon, leaving three more of each to transfer.

Soon as I went back to the office I was dragged to Jackson Cross's office and interrogated. I smarted off at first but apologized and came across with some of the truth and let Jackson in on the box. I tried to bargain but then just gave it to him and he let me go. The mysterious lady turned out to be Malloy's daughter Regan.

I went to the Post Office address Mac gave me and was

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Zack really wants his money

Mac Malden has the key to Rusty's

You never know what you'll dig up next when you're a P.I

All's well that ends well

directed to Malloy's residence at the Garden House. I told the landlady a few white lies and even broke down in grief over my poor crazy "Uncle." She let me in.

Malloy wasn't home, but I found a CD addressed to an Elijah Witt which I checked out on my computer but needed a password. Thinking I might have missed something I went back to Malloy's and found a pair of his jeans with the address of a waterfront warehouse he had rented.

I went to the warehouse, and found him, but so did the NSA. I escaped but Malloy didn't.

Day Five: The Pandora Device

After reporting to Fitzpatrick I went back to the warehouse and found a flight schedule and a scrap of paper titled #186. I also found a safe.

Buy a Combuster in Entertainment mode to help find the safe's combination (short on cash? Check out the NSA evidence room).The combination consists of the square roots of the safe's serial numbers (22, 31, 15, 07).

Inside the safe was a containment scrap and a key. I used the key to open the closet at the Garden House. I found a briefcase with Malloy's journal and a book titled *Messages From Outer Space.*

I called Regan, arranged a meeting, told about her father and gave her the journal hoping she could translate. She gave me the puzzle box her father had sent her. Lucia sent a fax. I called Lucia and asked her for help on anagrams. She agreed as long as I went back to NSA to lift a file she needed. She sent a key.

I talked to Mac about needing help with Dag and his NSA connection. Mac told me to go to the Morgue. I did and with the aid of a scalpel was able to open the G-H box and get Dag's other file cabinet key and a security card.

I found a code number and another key in Dag's file cabinet. I used his security card to get in the evidence room and opened up four lockers finding Lucia's CD (E-36), a high

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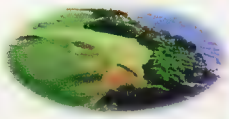

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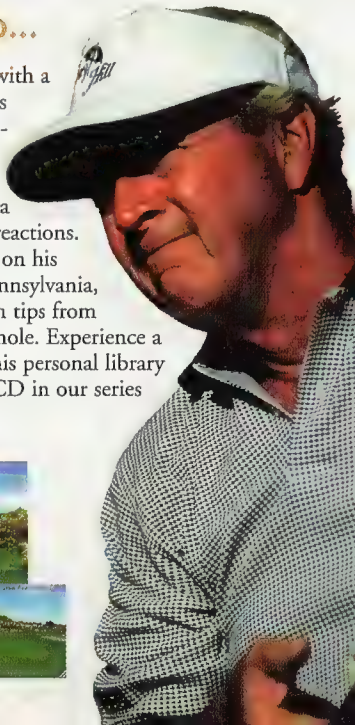

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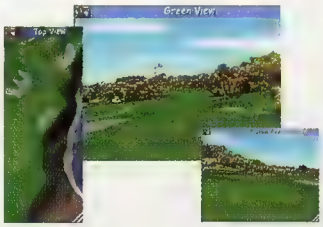
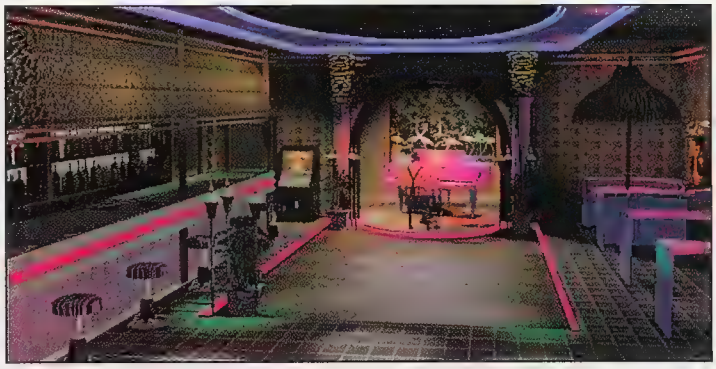


Mac and Tex have a little chat

A mysterious lady drops by

Finally, Tex meets Malloy

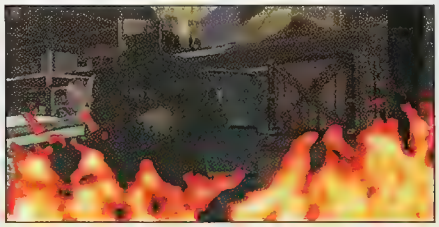
level security pass (E-13) Emily's puzzle box and five hundred dollars (B-16). As I started to leave I saw that the door had a security scanner. The items were coded to prevent theft! Luckily, I was able to de-magnetize the CD, the cash and Emily's box with the aid of the code number (1091).



Back to the Flamingo

Back at the office Regan called and said that she discovered some initials including AE. I called Fitzpatrick and he suggested AE stood for Archie Ellis. I looked up Archie's phone number and gave him a call. We arranged a meeting after I impressed him with my knowledge of the Plains of Nazca and the Gate of the Sun *(examine the two photos)*.

I used the tapestry I found in the warehouse to open Regan's puzzle box, and found some pegs that I combined with Emily's . I then combined the flight schedule with the map of Asia and used that with the box.



There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight

Although the flight schedule map didn't seem to correlate to the peg holes at first, I discovered that the first scheduled cities were North and South of each other. There were also two North-South peg holes (non-starred) that connected! The other peg holes were based on similar directional relationships on the map except that they crossed through the center point of the first line.

After opening Emily's box I paid Archie a visit and found out about Roswell. When I told Fitzpatrick I wanted to go to Roswell he gave me the coordinates. So off I go — Heh-heh! ■

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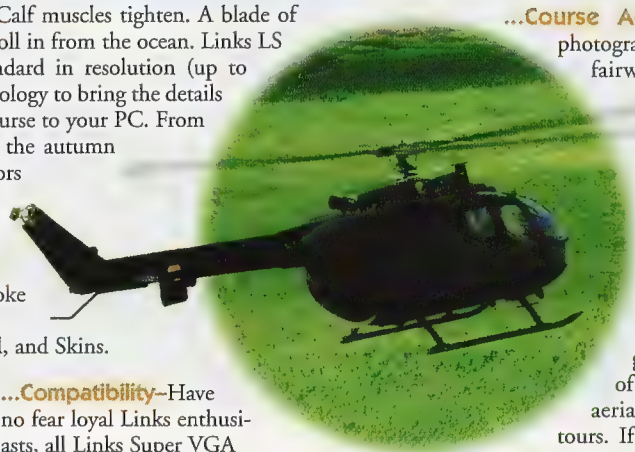

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by Steve Wartofsky

Less is More

Something old, something new; something bold, something blue. Crunch gets punchy.

This month's two featured topics are EA/Jane's imminent *NATO Fighters* add-on for *ATF* and Microsoft's month-away (planned release date, November 9th; mark your calendars) release of *Flight Simulator 95*. While both products bring lots of already familiar stuff to the table, one features some radical advances in technology, while the other gives you gameplay you'll never get rid of.

Technology first, since I'm sure *Flight Simulator* fans will be eager to hear about it. Yes, *FS95* is more than just a Win95 update to the classic. And no, it doesn't revamp the entire engine to bring *FS* to a Windows environment. How's that again? Well, most importantly for new users, this time around you'll literally put the disk in your CD-ROM drive, wait a few seconds, hit

Install and a few minutes later, off you go! Provided DirectX 2.0 is fully functional and not conflicting with anything important in your video card-and-driver environment, that is (not exclusively an issue for *FS*, by the way). Oh hey – did you know there's a new mag out, dedicated *entirely* to Win95 and video card nightmares? Yep. It's called *Card and Driver*. Naah. Oh well. Had one too many myself (nightmares, that is…hardware nightmares). Where were we? Oh yeah – well, to be succinct, keep a close hand on your video card's manual and any included drivers (or, especially, on-line updates). Most are okay about this, but some companies continue to provide their own proprietary (they claim more optimal) solutions to DirectX, and you may need to re-install some stuff after installing a DirectX game in some cases (or at the very least, be careful *not* to let the DirectX install over-write your current drivers if it queries you about this and your card manufacturer has recommended you not do so. Are you having fun yet? *Card and Driver* is brought to you by the manufacturers of *Plug and Pray*, the nite-lite guaranteed to give you a direct beam to God… er…DirectX…er… Bill).

The advantages of moving to Windows95

There's more to the Win95 move than that, though – fortunately. Assuming you get a clean install of *FS95* the first time (most will), you'll find that the entire interface has been revamped to make option selections much more comprehensible. It's now actually *fun* to make your realism, airport, scenery, flight, challenge, adventure, situation and views choices; the help system for this simulation (which will explain to you quickly *why* you'd want to do all of the above) now rivals anything out there for intuitiveness and availability. Once in the cockpit, context-sensitive help is available for almost all instrumentation, with the simple click of a right mouse button on the questionable object. If the immediate pop-up info isn't sufficient, you can pause the simulation and go into more depth in the on-line help, and get full-fledged explanations on almost everything you see in front of you (I didn't try right-clicking on the windshield, I must admit…).

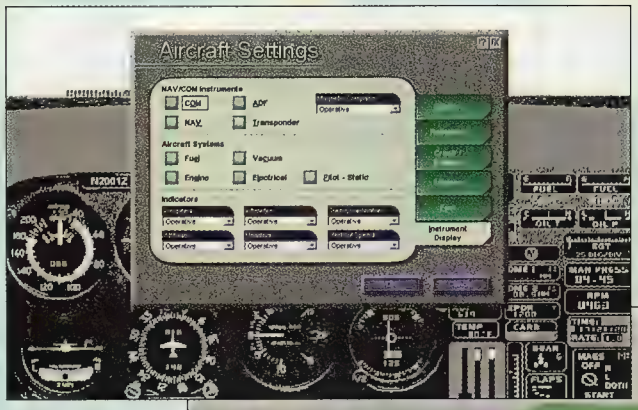
This moves towards the larger pleasure of the new version of *FS*, namely its complete integration into the Windows environment. You can play full screen or in a window, with no weird conflicts or shut-downs to interrupt your train (plane?) of thought or Excel calculations. Fly that last leg into San Jacinto while your spreadsheet's assessing whether your business will survive another year. It's actually more fun to have *FS* up and running on the desktop continuously, so you can switch to it in between various other Windows activities, than it is to have it separately full-screen. Now you finally have something to do during longer flights. Especially interesting is trying to browse the Internet and do a precision touch-and-go at the same time. I've got *FS* running next to my word processor as I write this (can you tell? What will virtual flying do to the prose style of more serious writers, I wonder…).

For the few and the finicky

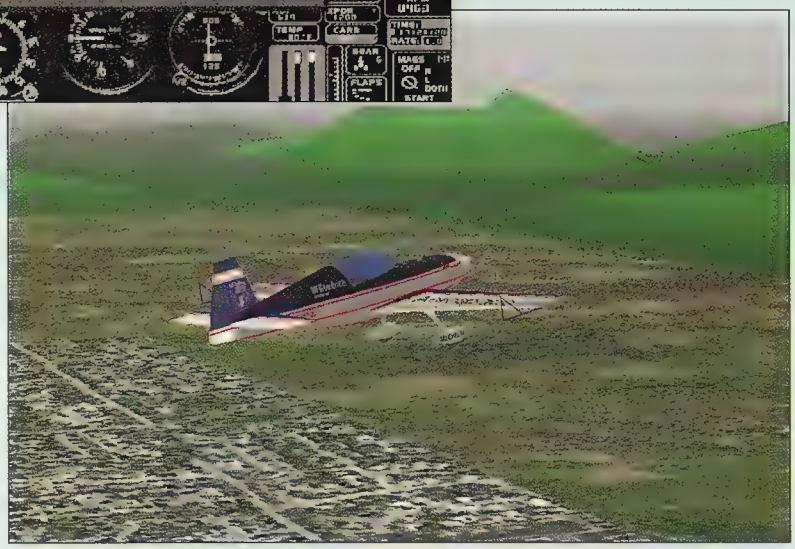
Of course, if you're an old fanarky who just *has* to have everything perfect and "realistic," you can by all means go back to all the old commands for *FS* and do it the way you always have (missionary position?), this time around however with the added benefits of dramatically improved flight models for the new Extra 300s and the included commercial airliner (the heavy really flies like a heavy, first time I've seen that…). *FS95* is more legacy-compatible than Windows95, even, and is being designed to continue to support previous add-ons, sceneries, home-made airplanes, coffee-cake window decorations, etc. Further, long-time players will be able to do everything the way they've done it before, without having to learn new keystrokes or re-program joystick macros and such. Joystick control and calibration goes entirely through the Win95 device managing interface, which simplifies things again – assuming you've got your joystick work-

These shots give you a view of all the different terrain technologies used in FS95

ing properly in Win95 (heh-heh, I'm evil… kiss me). The scenery combines a number of different mapping and texture technologies as well, giving you spot-intensive photo-realism, increased object count, classic *FS* poly-sparklies for the post-LSD-heads out there who like night-tripping across Tokyo, and excellent runway and airport detail. The database of airports and terrain has grown dramatically as well, and gives players more international flight capability than *FS* has ever seen before, Europe, Japan and Las Vegas notwithstanding (hey, Las Vegas *is* a different country; you'd know if you'd ever been there).



◀ **Extensive settings, with full context-sensitive help available**



▼ **The Extra is given loving attention in this installment of FS – notice the shadowing on the fuselage**

Well, more soon, when final arrives. The beta is already quite solid, and promises a smooth transition to the Win95 environment for what still remains *the* benchmark civilian flight sim. And hey, I haven't even mentioned the included training lessons, complete with Patti Wagstaff's input, the included challenges, adventures, etc. all of which in themselves could be considered a new product. When I eat cake, I always save the best for last.

You can play FS95 full screen or in a window, with no weird conflicts or shut-downs to interrupt your train of thought or Excel calculations…

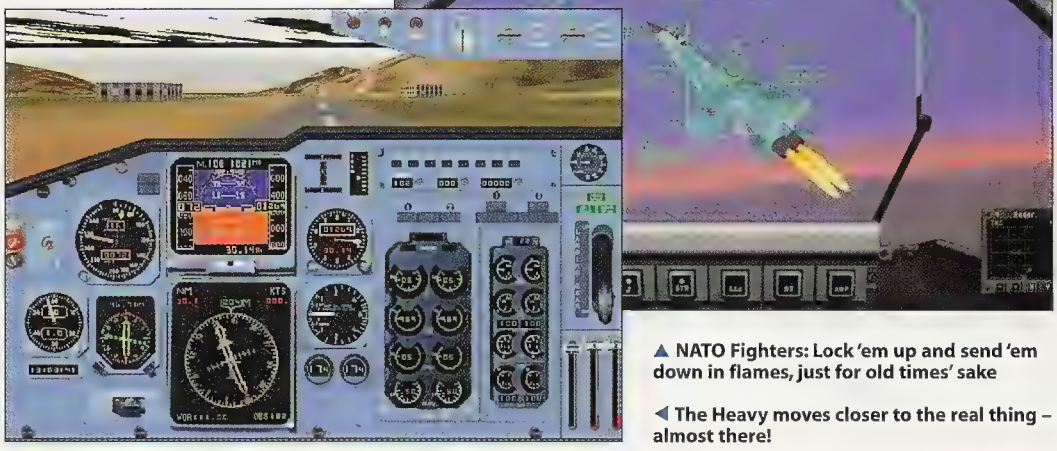
Buzzin' the Baltics

NATO Fighters from EA/Jane's is a lighter deal, but a longer one, for players who will never tire of this series (I'm one of 'em). Why are *USNF/MF/ATF/NF* such a continuous draw? I'm not alone here, I know that. For one thing, multi-player works quite well. For another, even though things look simple at the outset, the more you play, the more detail you see. I continue to be impressed with the variety of ways things will blow up in this series, for instance. As you become more experienced, it's really a gas to check out the planes you've just taken aim at from an outside view – all sorts of things happen. Ground targeting a base after finishing a mission provides some neat stuff, too (and a great check of your system's frame rate capacity, once it's all blowing up simultaneously; a Pentium Pro/P6, by the way, does a good job of moving it all along nicely, I've recently discovered over at a friend's). And, finally, the designers are doing more and more to improve flight models, in-cockpit views, instrument details, etc. etc. without getting in the way of gameplay.

EA/Jane's just seems to have a lock on *fun* with this series, and it continues with *NF*.

The info for *NF* is four new planes – F-16, EF2000, Saab Gripen (why? Oh well…) and Su-35 – and *40* new missions, with a new Baltic Campaign, all derived from Jane's info on potential world hot-spots. Cluster bombs and backfires are on offer this time around, too, and the Jane's Reference Guide is even hotter than before.

That's all for now, but the news is that *USNF '97* is closer around the corner than it was a month ago (well hey, it's almost the end of '96, hurrah!); we'll have more on that in a future issue. The obvious early news is that it'll be a Win95 product. Dear DirectX people: get your act together fast so we can all breathe easier. This is getting scary. I'm beginning to relish the days of DOS 4.0 (if you know what I'm talking about, you've been doing this too long – take up opera or something). Crunch Out. ■



▲ **NATO Fighters: Lock 'em up and send 'em down in flames, just for old times' sake**

◀ **The Heavy moves closer to the real thing – almost there!**

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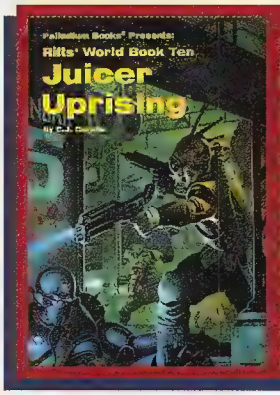

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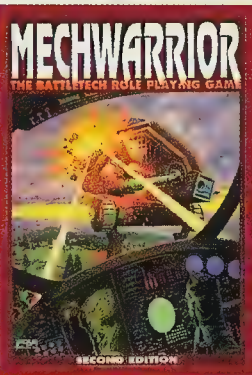

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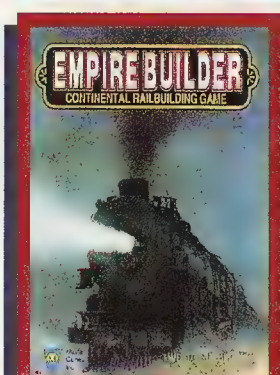

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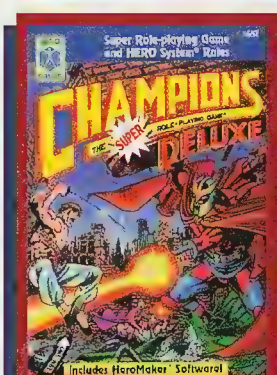

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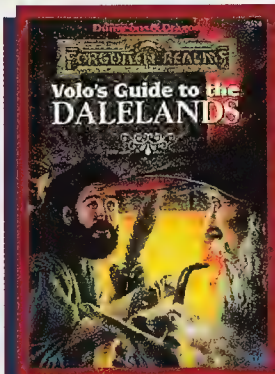

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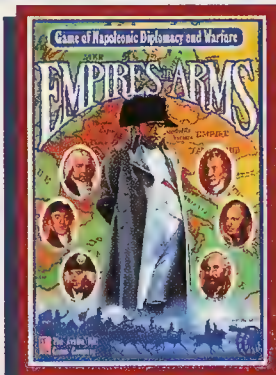

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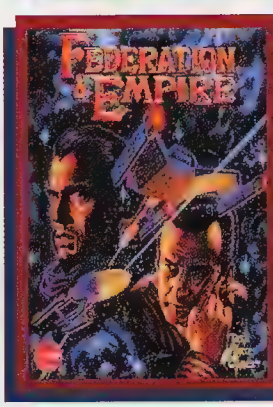

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by Ben Chiu

The Yo-Yo

Not the toy—the maneuver

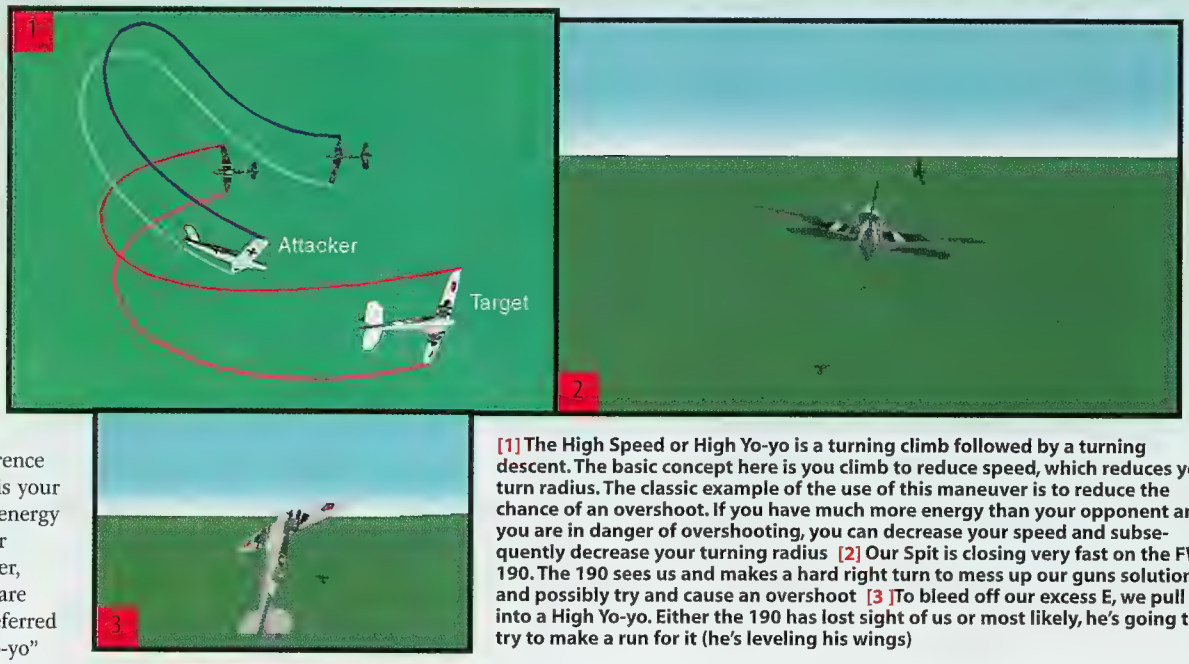
Over the last few months we've talked about turning, energy management and vertical maneuvering basics. This month we'll begin putting all of those little tidbits together and start talking about maneuvers. Just as we have been doing, we'll begin with simple concepts and move on from there. The simplest maneuver that encompasses the topics we've talked about is called the Yo-yo.

Yo-yo... what it is?

The Yo-yo is a simple turning battle maneuver that uses the vertical plane for energy management. In other words, turning at an oblique angle in order to use gravity to achieve tighter turning. We will discuss how and why in a minute, but first some semantics. Yo-yo's are categorized as either a "High Speed Yo-yo" or a "Low Speed Yo-yo." As the names suggest, the difference between the two is your general airspeed/energy in relation to your opponent. However, these maneuvers are also commonly referred to as the "high yo-yo" or "low yo-yo." Then there are those who say that "high" and "low" refers to the initial direction of the maneuver. Regardless of which is correct, I believe both arguments are applicable since they both end up with the same results/maneuver. However, some may find that the latter may be easier to remember than the former. In any case, let's talk about each and you can decide for yourself.

The High Speed or High Yo-yo is a turning climb followed by a turning descent. The basic concept here is you climb to reduce speed, which reduces your turn radius. As we've discussed previously, gravity will also reduce your turn radius further on the descent portion (recall that the gravity effect is governed by angle of descent and current airspeed). However, as a "high speed" maneuver, there's the added benefit of increasing the distance you travel (also now at a slower speed due to gravity/climb). This also increases the distance between you and your target. The classic example of the use of a High Speed Yo-yo is to reduce the chance of an overshoot. If you have much more energy than your opponent and you are in danger of overshooting, you can decrease your speed and subsequently decrease your turning radius with this maneuver.

The Low Speed or Low Yo-yo on the surface may basically seem the same, however, it is the exact opposite in execution and results. Instead of an initial turning climb, the Low Speed Yo-yo is an initial descending turn followed by a climbing turn. However, "technically," as a "low speed" maneuver, the difference is when it is used. The concept is the initial turning dive increases your airspeed. The classic example for this is when you have the throttle maxed and you're below cornering speed (turning with low or no energy reserve). As you know, the initial dive converts altitude to airspeed and puts you back onto a more favorable position on the performance curve. The increased airspeed also decreases the distance between you and your target.



[1] The High Speed or High Yo-yo is a turning climb followed by a turning descent. The basic concept here is you climb to reduce speed, which reduces your turn radius. The classic example of the use of this maneuver is to reduce the chance of an overshoot. If you have much more energy than your opponent and you are in danger of overshooting, you can decrease your speed and subsequently decrease your turning radius [2] Our Spit is closing very fast on the FW-190. The 190 sees us and makes a hard right turn to mess up our guns solution and possibly try and cause an overshoot [3]To bleed off our excess E, we pull into a High Yo-yo. Either the 190 has lost sight of us or most likely, he's going to try to make a run for it (he's leveling his wings)

Yo-yo: offensive or defensive?

Some armchair pilots categorize maneuvers as being offensive, defensive, or both. As you can imagine, there are always exceptions. Never the less, the yo-yo is usually described as an offensive maneuver. While I agree that the High Speed Yo-yo is just that, the Low Speed Yo-yo can be used defensively against lesser skilled opponents. Let me explain why. In any turning battle, the idea is to out turn your opponent and gain an angular advantage on your opponent.

What makes this difficult to do is that in order to turn tighter, you need to pull maximum G at the lowest airspeed (corner speed) as possible. However, as you pull G's, you bleed airspeed, and if you loose too much airspeed, your wings will not be able to generate enough lift to return the required G. Since the elevator (and / or rudder - depending on your orientation) controls airspeed (remember throttle controls altitude), the Low Yo-yo is an energy management technique to maintain corner speed. If you can maintain corner speed and your opponent can't (in roughly equal aircraft), you will eventually gain the advantage even if you're defensive to begin with (and not blown to pieces right away).

On the other hand, while using the High Yo-yo as a defensive maneuver meets the "do something unexpected" criteria, it usually results in an early retirement for yourself. This is because if you're energy is too high (warranting a High Yo-yo), you're turning rate is diminished due to the high airspeed – the enemy can out turn you and shoot you. If you're energy is comparatively low (in which case you shouldn't be doing a High Yo-yo), you'll only go slower and get your tail shot off while you're hanging in the air. As I stated earlier, there are always exceptions, however, if you do live from a defensive High Yo-yo, it's usually because your opponent screwed up (making you lucky) rather than it being a sound maneuver. I'll explain why in a future installment. ■

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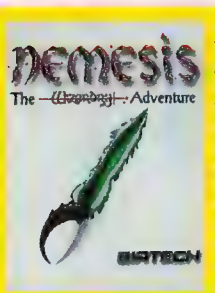

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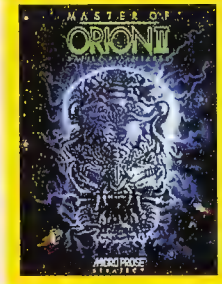

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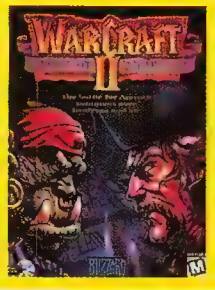

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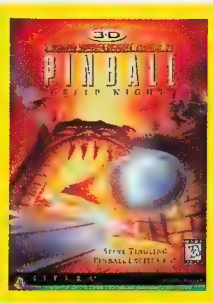

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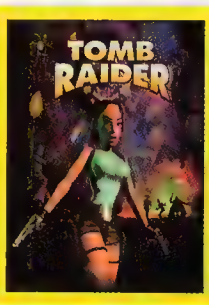

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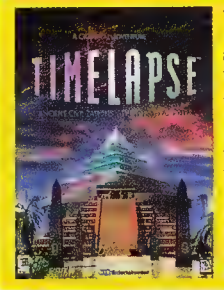

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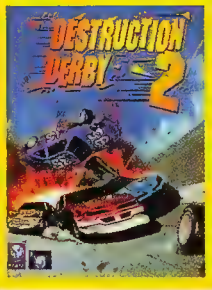

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by Ben Chiu

AH-64D Longbow

Part II: Jane unmasked

Last time we discussed how to get to your targets in one piece. This month we'll discuss attack strategies.

Attack strategies

You can't fly *Longbow* like you fly other chopper sims. Instead of the *Rambo* style, "guns a-blazing" attacks you may have become accustomed to, you need to fly *Longbow* like a sniper. I'm sure some of you have discovered by now that doing the former puts you on the fast track to the "exploding head" video cut scene (very gruesome). Since realism is the focus of the Jane's Combat Simulations brand and *Longbow* is the definitive Jane's sim, you need to fly with some regard for your virtual life. This is why sniper tactics are the best choice. Basically, you need to get in undetected, find a good place to hide, and then proceed to "pick off" your targets before the enemy even realizes where trouble is coming from. Let's talk about how to do this.

Low and slow or slow and low

The main reasons for flying low and slow, discussed last time, were to avoid "premature ground contact" and to help avoid detection. However, there is another reason for flying slow: to take advantage of the maneuverability of the AH-64. The main strength of the AH-64 is the ability to maneuver in directions fixed wing aircraft cannot. You can fly sideways and backwards in a helicopter. That is, *if* you fly slow enough. Too much forward momentum will inhibit your ability to change direction; any direction. This includes going down (willfully, that is). Transitions from any of these directions to another require coming to a brief momentary hover. Therefore, the closer your airspeed is to hover, the faster you'll be able to make the transition. Slower airspeeds will also result in less "ballooning" (unwanted increase in altitude) during the transitions to hover.

Hover lover

I know, some of you may be cringing – "hover in combat?!" That's right. Let me explain. First, the danger in hovering is directly proportional to where you do it. If you hover over an enemy stronghold, you'll convert your aircraft into a very expensive roto-tiller extremely quickly. You need to hover somewhere where you are undetected. The way to do this is to note the waypoint which contains your mission targets before you start your mission (you can access the nav map by pressing <Alt-N> while in flight). As you approach the waypoint(s), note your distance to the waypoint on your IHADSS (Integrated Helmet and Display Sighting System). When you're about 7-8km out, start to make your transition to hover. Depending on your airspeed, you may need to adjust when you begin your transition. The idea is not to gain altitude during the transition so as not to reveal your position. You want to be at a hover about 5k

[1] Just to avoid seeing Longbow Software Development Director Will McBurnett chew out your alter ego (CW2 Spiccoli) again should be reason enough for most to complete the missions. "Chill Sergeant dude. There was this mondo gnarly ack ack all roiwht"

[2] Too much forward momentum will inhibit your ability to change directions. Slower airspeeds will also result in less "ballooning" (unwanted increase in altitude) during the transitions to hover. Even with the collective bottomed out, it's very easy to gain altitude if you're not careful

[3] Hover where you can remain undetected. The way to do this is to note the waypoint which contains your mission targets before you start your mission. Access the nav map by pressing <Alt-N> while in flight if you need a quick memory refresher

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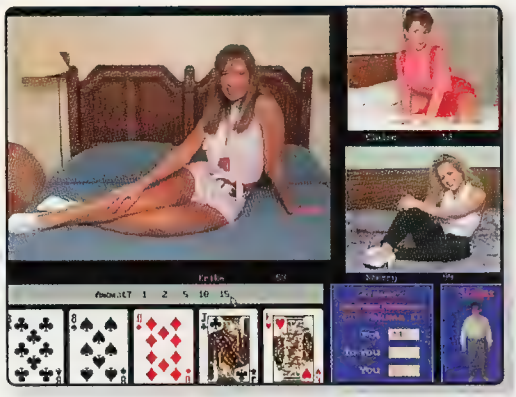

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out. Of course flying slow to start with will allow you to come to a hover faster, but the slow speed will also allow you time to scope out the area and find a place to mask your hover. If there aren't any hills or mountains to hide behind, don't sweat it. Just remain low and you'll be all right. You have several things working in your favor. The (relatively) long distance from your targets reduces the ability of the enemy to detect you. I'm not sure if this is due to the curvature of the earth or what, but it works. Finally, a hovering aircraft is harder for radar to pick up since it "blends" into the background because it isn't moving.

One track mind

While all of the avionics and target options available in *Longbow* may seem overwhelming, you can cut down on some of the choices by choosing one or two options and using them exclusively in most situations. TADS (Target Acquisition and Designation Sight) mode is one of these. Unless your TADS is damaged, there really isn't any reason to use FCR (Fire-Control Radar) mode, because the information provided there is also provided on the TSD (Tactical Situation Display). The danger comes from being so accustomed to one mode, you push the other ones to the wayside and disregard their differences, so be aware of it. LOAL (Lock On After Launch) and LOBL (Lock On Before Launch) modes are another candidate for such "streamlining." Since the invention of LOAL mode, there doesn't seem to be any reason to use LOBL anymore. You can use LOAL exclusively and it'll be another thing you won't have to worry about. As long as you make sure you lock up your target a couple of seconds before impact, there is nothing to worry about (a missile Time Of Flight countdown timer is located on the IHADSS after launch).

Longbow long reach

Since long range is good for defense, you should try and expend your ordnance as reasonably far out as possible (this of course was the main advantage of the Longbow archers of anchient times. Kind of makes sense that McDonnell Douglas named the AH-64D "Longbow" now, doesn't it?). Missiles aren't a problem, since you can fire those far away (at reasonably safe distances from danger); however, guns and rockets have much shorter effective ranges. The max op range for each of these unguided weapons is given in the manual, but depending on the target and line of sight, you can usually stretch these parameters a bit. Remember, just as with everything else, there is a trade-off. If your target is reasonably soft, you can usually get gun kills at 2-3km, but you'll need many more rounds to do so. The same holds true for rockets. You can destroy targets with them up to 5km away.

[1] If there aren't any hills or mountains to mask your hover, just remain low and you'll be all right. I'm not sure if this is due to the curvature of the earth or what, but the (relatively) long distance from your targets reduces the ability of the enemy to detect you

[2] When first bobbing up to ID your target and launch, note at what altitude you achieve lock. That is the altitude you want to get back to when you get final lock. In this case it is about 60'

[3] Pop Sideways attacks are a little more difficult since you don't have hard numbers to tell you when you cross that safety line. However, Bob-Up IHADSS mode's Hover position box can indicate your safe position if you toggle on again at the safe point

Bob-Up, bub

While staying out at long range and picking off your targets is effective, sometimes it just isn't possible to complete your mission from that far out. You need to use Bob-Up tactics. This is explained in the *Longbow* manual, so I won't repeat it here. However, here are a couple of tips. When first bobbing up and ID'ing your target and launching, note at what altitude you're at when you achieve lock. That will be the altitude you want to get back to when you get your final lock-on. Also note at what altitude your ASE lights up. This will indicate what altitude you'll want to stay below. Of course in some cases you'll need to fly above the "safe" altitude to achieve final target lock. However, if you know these two points, you can time your bob-up and return to minimize your exposure. Pop Sideways attacks are a little more difficult, since you don't have hard numbers to tell you when you cross that safety line. However, Bob-Up IHADSS mode's Hover Position Box can indicate your safe position if you toggle on at that safe point. The only other tip I can offer is to try not to become collective happy and overcompensate. Nothing is worse than pilot induced oscillations. If you get out of control, you can always press the "h" key and engage the auto-hover mode. While this is considered cheating by some, my understanding is that the real AH-64 has a function similar to this (although probably not as simple), so use it if you need it.

What's your angle?

Many of the mission targets you'll encounter will be located in stronghold-type encampments. These are the places where the enemy has arranged themselves to make attacks from the likes of pilots like yourself more difficult; their assets are hidden and well protected. Rather than try your luck and enter this gauntlet to search for mission targets, it is very helpful (and safer) to attack these areas from two different angles. Ideally, you'd want to send your wingie off to attack the area from another angle, but since you don't have this option in this release of *Longbow*, you have to do this yourself. Pick your initial attacking position and take out threats and mission targets. When you've cleaned out the area, skirt your way to a second attack position 90 degrees and 5km out from the target area. This will allow you to strike targets which were hidden from your first perspective. While you can usually destroy everything you need to using this method, sometimes an up-close and personal inspection is unavoidable. However, you should have been able to remove the majority of threats before entering the danger zone. Any one left over will be easier to take care of, since there will be fewer of them. If you need assistance finding a second attack point, try adding additional waypoints for reference during mission planning. Just make sure you note the new waypoint numbers of the mission targets. You don't want to wander over that by mistake. While it can be exhilarating, it'll usually ruin your day. ■

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by Ben Chiu

World Circuit Racing: Grand Prix II

Getting yourself around the course

While I can't promise you that that these hints and tips will make you World Champion in MicroProse's *World Circuit Racing: Grand Prix II* (*GP2*), I *can* give you a good foundation to get you started on your way to the Championship. The rest will be up to you. Before we get into car setup, we have to cover some of the essentials.

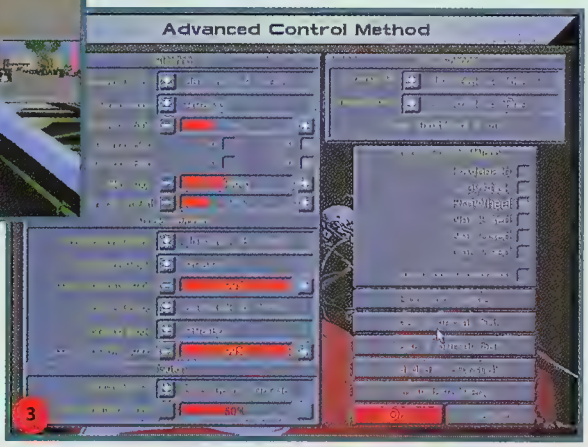
CPU psyche

For years, we sim heads have had the words "frame rate" drilled into our brains. Understandably, any sim lacking a playable frame rate simply isn't playable or enjoyable. We'd give up some graphics detail (reluctantly) to trade for a couple of extra precious frames. However, while *GP2* qualifies as a CPU cycle sucker, with the quantity of graphics options available to you, you can usually reach a balance of performance that all but the most demanding can accept on most machinery. The first thing to be aware of is that the estimated frame rate numbers in the graphics detail level screen are just that – an estimate (which seems more accurate in the VGA mode than in SVGA).

While frame rate remains important, what seems to be more critical for good performance is CPU processor occupancy. Quite simply, if your occupancy number is too high, it doesn't matter what frame rate you've got it set to; you're not getting it anyway. Press the <O> when driving and the processor occupancy percentage will be displayed. The highest occupancy number you're likely to see on any track usually comes at the starting grid, so check your numbers there. Note that each track seems to have a different level of CPU demand. I believe Monaco is one of the most CPU demanding, so if you set your level there, you should be pretty well set up for any of the other tracks. By adjusting your frame rate and detail levels, you control the processor occupancy. Shoot for a number as close to 100% as possible (which in SVGA, will be a couple of frames below the estimate). While you can go over 100%, try not to allow the occupancy to go too high. 120-130% seems okay for me. Graphics hounds will probably find 17 frames is the playability limit. Anything less does not provide good "feel" for what your car is doing, and that's critical if you're going to drive fast.

Texture lecture

Okay, so now you know how to get good frame performance; but which graphics details should you turn down? In the long run, it's all a matter of personal taste, but some simple tips here may help. First, you do have the option to use the automatic detail setting. However, the problem with that is that the SVGA estimated frame rate and processor occupancy don't match well, so ultimately, processor occupancy will often be too high, and frame rate will thus suffer. However, don't despair. The manual process isn't too mysterious; when faced with what to turn off, drop rear view mirror textures first. The reasoning here is that you'll never spend enough time looking in the rear view mirrors to enjoy the detail there (when racing, at least). The only concern is if there is a car behind or not (the same goes for objects; the rear view mirror details can be dropped here, too). Next, off goes the sky texture. It looks nice, but it isn't critical for driving and the sensation of speed (true of most sims, actually).



[1] While frame rate remains important, what seems to be more critical for good performance is CPU processor occupancy. If your occupancy number is too high, it doesn't matter what frame rate you've got it set to - you're not getting it anyway. While you can go over 100%, try not to allow the occupancy to go too high. 120-130% seems okay.

[2] The estimated frame rate numbers in the graphics detail level screen are just that - an estimate. Opt to turn off rear view mirror textures first. Next, sky texture. It looks nice, but it isn't critical for driving and the sensation of speed. However, note that certain textures such as smoke texture don't change the estimate, but will ultimately slow the sim down and increase processor usage when they appear.

[3] The way a car "feels" is very much dependent on its setup and car setup has a lot to do with controller setup. In fact, many problems such as push (understeer) have been products of not enough controller steering lock rather than poor suspension setup. You'll also want to adjust your pedals low sensitivity as high as is comfortable. This will make the pedals more forgiving e.g. won't spin your tires or lock up your brakes on the slightest touch.

During your quest for higher frame rates, you've probably noticed that by un-checking some of the graphics options, the frame rate estimate number doesn't change. This may cause you to leave the box checked. However, I've found that certain textures – such as smoke texture – doesn't change the estimate, but it *will*

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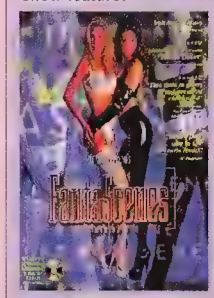

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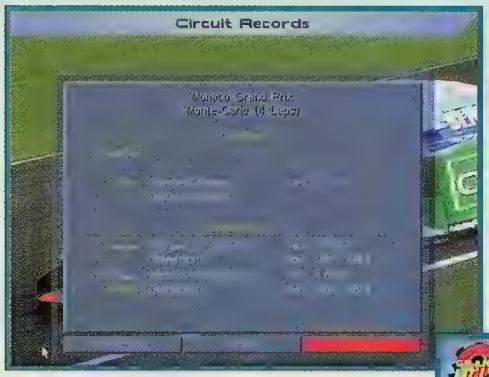
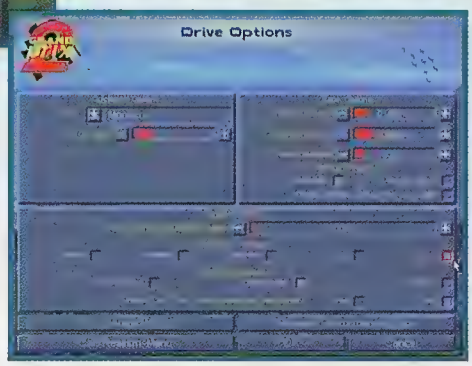
ultimately slow the sim down and increase processor usage. These are the kinds of things you want to turn off first if you must turn things down. This is because, while it won't affect your processor occupancy number at the start of the race, it will bog your system down noticeably when you smoke your tires, when you use too much throttle, or brake too hard.

Performance without control is nothing

If you're serious about driving *GP2*, I suggest getting a good a good wheel/pedal combo. While I've been able to get faster lap times using a joystick and keyboard setup, it doesn't compare to the wheel and pedals for realism. *GP2* accepts either; however, as some of you may have noticed, *GP2* doesn't drive like any other racing sim. This is because it models F1 cars as true to form as we've seen. F1 cars are not turbocharged, so power is instantaneous. You can spin your tires very easily. The same goes for braking ability. The exotic composite cars are very light, so braking must be handled with finesse. Although we haven't discussed car setup yet, it is important to point out that the way a car "feels" is very much dependent on its setup. For instance, if your car is set up very loose, it will be very hard to drive and will not impart very good "feel" to you. Furthermore, car setup has a lot to do with controller setup. In fact, many problems such as push (understeer) have been products of not enough controller steering lock, rather than poor suspension setup. So this is something to look out for. To get you in the ball park, drive the stock setup on a track with steering help off. Adjust your steering lock so you can take the fastest turn at full speed and the slowest turn at a reasonable speed. As for the pedals, you'll want to adjust your low sensitivity as high as comfortable. This will make the pedals more forgiving; you won't spin your tires or lock up your brakes at the slightest touch.



▲ **Learn how fast you have to go to be competitive. This will help you keep track of how much work you need to do, but more importantly, it can be invaluable for car setup. Looking at lap records is a good place to start**



▶ **GP2 gives you the option to ride along with the other drivers, so take advantage of it. Just as in real life, learn from the fast guys. It is the best method for learning important clues and tips about the track. Set your opposition standard to Ace and the opposition spread to 1994 levels. This will make everyone drive the fastest they can**

Learn from the pros

When faced with a new track, it is important to learn a few things. First, learn how fast you have to go to be competitive. This will help you keep track of how much work you need to do, but more importantly, will be invaluable for car setup. Looking at lap records is a good place to start, but it isn't the best. *GP2* gives you the option to ride along with the other drivers, so take advantage of it. Just as in real life, learn from the fast guys. It is the best method for learning important clues and tips about the track. Set your opposition standard to Ace, and the opposition spread to 1994 levels. This

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will make everyone drive the fastest they can. At the start of the race, move into one of the cars at the beginning of the grid and take a ride. Usually Michael Schumacher, Damon Hill, Gerhard Berger, or David Coulthard will be fastest, so you'll be okay riding with one of them. Note the speeds in all of the turns and straights. Most importantly, top speed is obtained in the longest part of the track and in the slowest corners. This will be important for car setup later on. Also note which driving line the best drivers are taking (they don't all follow the "ideal driving line" indicated) and where the best places are to pass. Not only is this entertaining to watch, it's all good, valuable stuff to absorb.

Driver's Ed

Of course, all of the above will remain confusing if you don't know the track layout well. *You need to learn the track. GP2* makes the sometimes frustrating step easy and enjoyable. Set as many driving aids as you need to get around the track (note that you may need to lower your opposition level to enable some of the driving aids). The most important thing for a beginner is the ideal driving line option <F5>. Note where landmarks are, as they can be indispensable for remembering what part of the track comes up next. If you press <F6> and enable the suggested gear option, it can give you clues as to how fast you can go into the upcoming turn. However, don't get too attached to the actual gear you're using, as the suggested gear will most likely change when we start adjusting the car setup. When you advance to manual braking, base where you apply your brakes on track landmarks. It'll take some trial and error, but not only will this help your lap time consistency, you'll need to start formulating references now for future comparisons. ■

▲ Set as many driving aids as you need to get around the track. The most important for a beginner is the ideal driving line option <F5>. Note where landmarks are as they can be indispensable for remembering what part of the track comes up next. If you press <F6> and enable the suggested gear option, it can give you clues as to how fast you can go into the upcoming turn. However, don't get too attached to the actual gear you're using as the suggested gear will most likely change when we start adjusting the car setup

◀ At the start of the race move into one of the cars at the beginning of the grid and take a ride. Note the speeds in all of the turns and straights. Most importantly, top speed obtained in the longest part of the track and in the slowest corners. This will be important for car setup later on

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Review: Links LS Access DOS ★★★★½

To a computer golfer, the "legend" in this title could refer to the game itself. *Links386* ruled the computer duffer roost literally for years, with the only serious challenger being the *PGA Tour* series from Electronic Arts. Still, all legends wane eventually, and after the thousands of hours fans put into it, *Links386* was starting to show its age. Most notably, the more anal computer golfers had learned to aim by counting pixels, and scores of 30 or more under par became common. The rest of us have been waiting for a fresh start, and here, finally, it is.

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL

Teeing off with all the camera views open. The hit on performance is quite small

Access certainly took their sweet time finishing up *Links LS,* but the wait was worth it. First, the graphics are astonishingly beautiful (with resolutions up to 1600x1200 if you have enough RAM, and color depths between 32K and 16 million colors) and fully customizable. The rolling hills of the courses, the shadows of the trees, the fog hugging the valleys… it really *is* like being there. Ambient sounds help reinforce the feeling.

Second, gameplay has been improved in many small ways. While recorded players are still available (and this time out, you can have wind and varying course conditions in a recorded game), you can opt for modem or network play if you wish. If you prefer computer opponents, you can generate them at will; each will have random stats (which are fully editable). The swing meter has been changed: now you hold the button down until you reach the desired power, then let it up and click once for the snap during the meter's return.

▲ Purists will want to turn off all the extra camera views

▶ The control panel pops up along the bottom of the screen

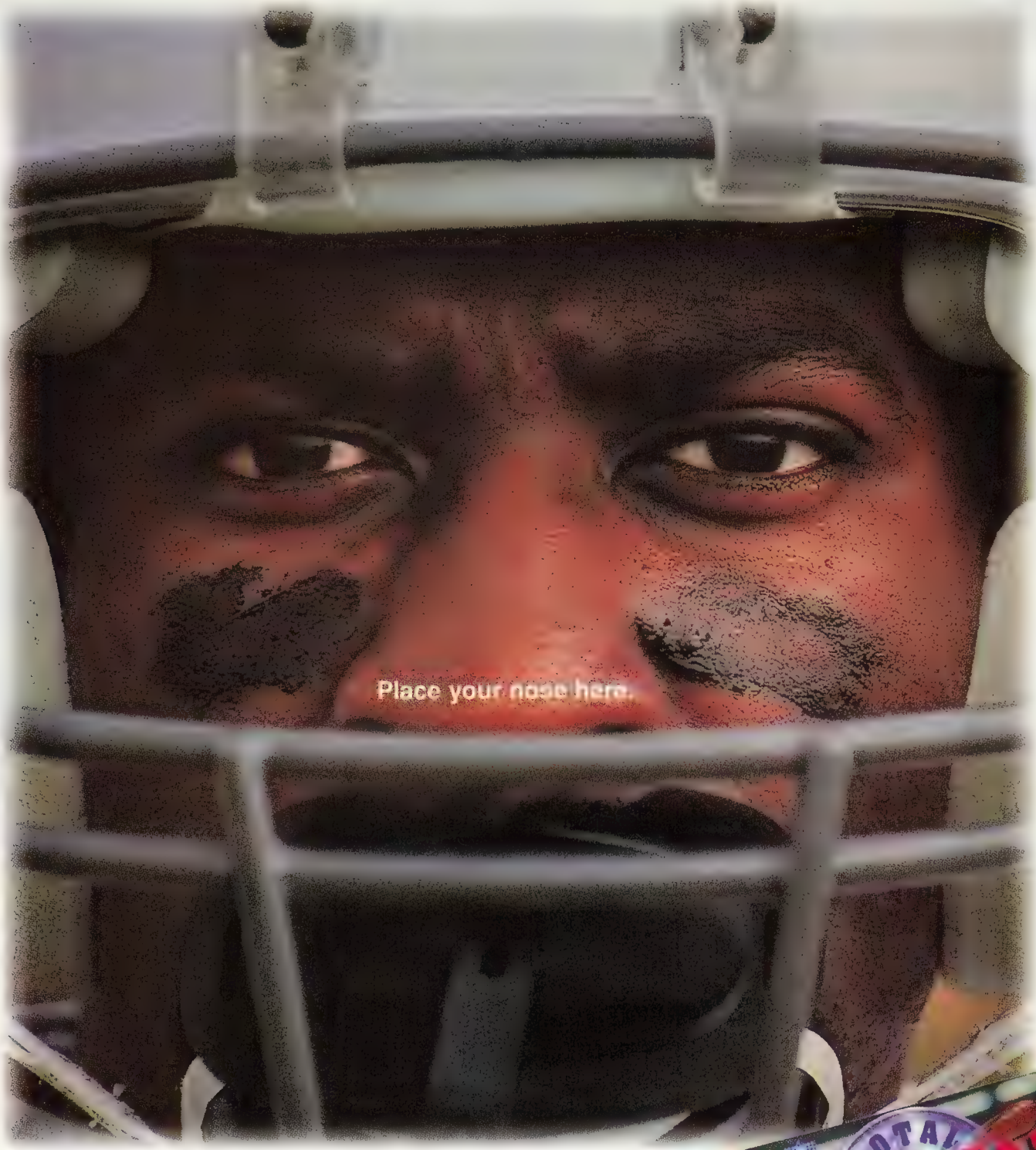
The ball physics have been improved, and small imperfections in a ball's flight introduced (to foil the pixel counters, if nothing else). Access no doubt noted all the online *Links386* tournaments, and they've made things easier for us. A "Verify Score" option is now available at the end of a round, assuming you didn't save the game, and took no mulligans or "gimmes." Once you've verified a score, you'll get a code that can be sent to an opponent. He or she can enter the code into their copy of *Links LS* and it'll prove that you weren't exaggerating. Verified scores are only available in stroke play (you also have a choice of stroke play, skins, best ball and match play).

For those of you who've seen the packaging and are still trying to figure out exactly what you get, *Links LS* comes with the basic golf engine, the first in the "Resort Series" of add-ons which features the Village and Plantation courses from the Kapalua Resort in Hawaii, and the first in the "Tour Player Series," which features Arnold Palmer and his home course at Latrobe Country Club. Also planned is a "Celebrity Player Series," featuring movie stars and athletes from other sports. The nice thing about the Player series is that not only do you get a course, you also get animation and sound files of the person covered by the package. As for the "starter" courses, they offer a nice mix. The Kapalua courses tend to be open and airy, while Latrobe has some of the narrowest fairways you'll ever see.

All of the add-ons come with a ton of multimedia fluff. Most of it is in the form of movies, but there's some "VR Tour" material which uses the engine from Access' *Pandora Directive* and allows you to wander around a rendered building.

Lest this entire review be one big gush of fawning admiration, there are still some flies in the ointment. First, short putts are still way too easy to blow by overshooting. There's a gimme option that works within a foot or so, but if you use it you can't verify your score. Second, though the manual and the interface both give optimal distances for each course, once again you're on your own when pitching or putting. No doubt a rainy afternoon will be spent practicing chips and putts and noting distances. Third, stance is still not a problem. You'll find your onscreen golfer standing level and solid in the most bizarre of places (on the other hand, ball lie in regards to slope *is* now modeled correctly).

There are tons of more options to cover, like being able to edit the sound files, the ability to import *Links 386* SVGA courses, or how you can have four small windows showing different angles, and watch the ball fly in each one (there is now a pause between your mousing on the swing meter, and your onscreen golfer actually swinging, so you can enjoy the animations easily). The bottom line, though, is clear: if you liked *Links386* you'll *love Links LS.* If you love golf, you need this program for winters and rainy days. Buy it. *–Peter Smith*



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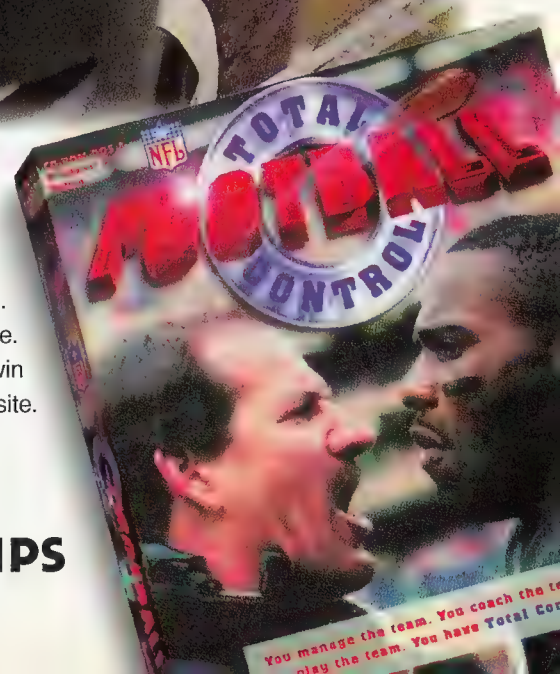

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Review

Front Page Sports Baseball Pro '96

Sierra Windows ★★★½☆

Most machines won't be able to handle this high resolution screen. It's too bad - it looks fab, though the players get mighty small

When Sierra released *Front Page Sports Baseball 94* near the day of the baseball strike, it appeared to be every baseball geek's dream game. It had all of the stats and options a player could dream of, and it played a decent game on the field as well. It did, however, possess a number of obvious glitches that were subsequently addresses in various patches. However, this game has angered many, because it was *so* close to perfection.

Enter the attempt at perfection, *Front Page Sports Baseball Pro 96*. Sure, the name's ungainly (then again, you *are* reading *Computer Games Strategy Plus*), but gamers hoped it would address the inadequacies of the original, while perhaps adding a few new wrinkles. Here it is, all wrapped in its new Windows facelift, and it's still… controversial. And still flawed. And still the best overall baseball game on the market.

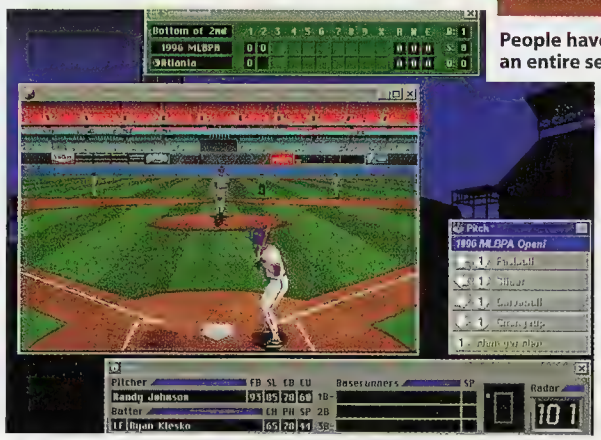
The integration into the Windows environment is schizophrenic. On the plus side, the game runs in a multi-windowed interface, giving you the option to run in higher resolutions and see more information on the screen at one time (with a speed hit on the animated screens). The game can also be minimized to simulate seasons in the background, though tragically, it'll only simulate one day at a time (and it literally takes days to simulate a 162 game season – let's get a "quick sim" option in here, fast).

On the negative side, the shell interface for editing players, creating leagues, viewing stats and doing all of the spreadsheet-y things is still terrible. The menu structure is inconsistent, incoherent and incomprehensible. The right mouse button is unused, the interface is ugly (in fact, you may be tricked into thinking it's the DOS version running in a window) and it doesn't re-size to fill the screen if you're running higher than 640x480 resolutions (that text gets real tiny real fast). Even little details, like typing in commands, is handled clumsily (just make it like every text editor – text is highlighted when selected, and typing replaces it). Windows provides a fairly slick environment for data entry, and provides a common user interface (i.e., all file options would be on the File menu). Use it, or create something better. This ain't it.

The on-field action has been improved, but it's still not the seamless 3D technology employed in such recent releases as *Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball* and *Triple Play 97*. There's still a slight delay as the game switches from the batter-pitcher interface to the on-field view, which is 3D (as it was in *Baseball 94* – it was the first, y'know?).

Because the game was designed for Windows and Windows 95, none of the go-fast goodies for video were employed, so performance, even on a fast machine, is less than exemplary.

Special notices must be given to the in-depth advanced pitching interface. Never before in a game have you been given so much control over the pitch, from location to speed. Its only failing is that, in arcade mode, it's not particularly exciting. There are more interesting ways to do this, those that could take into account pitcher fatigue and pressure, but this is purely button-click pitching. However, for the geeky baseball *grognard*, it's still heaven (so says this ex-pitcher). Hitting in advanced mode is also somewhere beyond tough. There's a fine line between being too easy and too tough; this game may have crossed it.



The pitcher-batter interface. Pitching is a joy

But it's not an arcade game. Not a good one, at least. *Baseball Pro 96*'s greatest advantage remains its industrial-strength simulating ability. There's no game out there which comes even close to the feature set of this game. There are career modes, which actually take into account aging and spring training improvements, computer-controlled trading (it's not great, but it's a start), injuries, minor leagues, extensive league creation options and tons of more good stuff. Most of these are carryovers from *Baseball 94*, so the fact that they don't show more than a subtle improvement is a bit disappointing.

Most of these disappointments, however, get thrown out the window when you actually get down to the business of managing. If you want a real test of your managing prowess, draft an entire league of computer-generated players, thereby eliminating all preconceived notions of player performances (this game, due to its physics- rather than statistics-based modeling, will never be a great replicator of seasons). Use your own drafting and management skills to build a winner for years (it's this mode where you wish for a better computer GM).

Unfortunately, there's the issue of program bugs which has (still!) to be addressed. Subtle play balancing problems abound (weird ratings equaling weird stats, things like that) and problems persist with the way the computer handles relievers (resulting in every player on a roster being used throughout a season – one outfielder in a particular season was used in 10 games for

People have died waiting for this game to simulate an entire season

seven innings and walked 65 batters, almost leading the league). Then there are the types of glitches which, for instance, cause the game to skip the entire World Series (it inexplicably jumps right to game seven, with all of the others finishing with 0-0 scores), or cause it to fail to issue intentional walks in management mode. Many more of this sort exist.

It's embarrassing, really, to see so many obvious problems in a commercial release, especially when many are holdovers from the 1994 version (at press time, a patch is "on the way"). According to Sierra, much of the two years of development was spent on the Windows conversion, which seems a wee bit hard to believe. More time should have been spent on testing, that's for sure, though testing it must be a nightmare, considering all the variables involved. However, to completely trash this game because of its failings would be a mistake, for its many excellencies more than compensate. To a point. In part because of all that is good here, the bad parts, namely the bugs and

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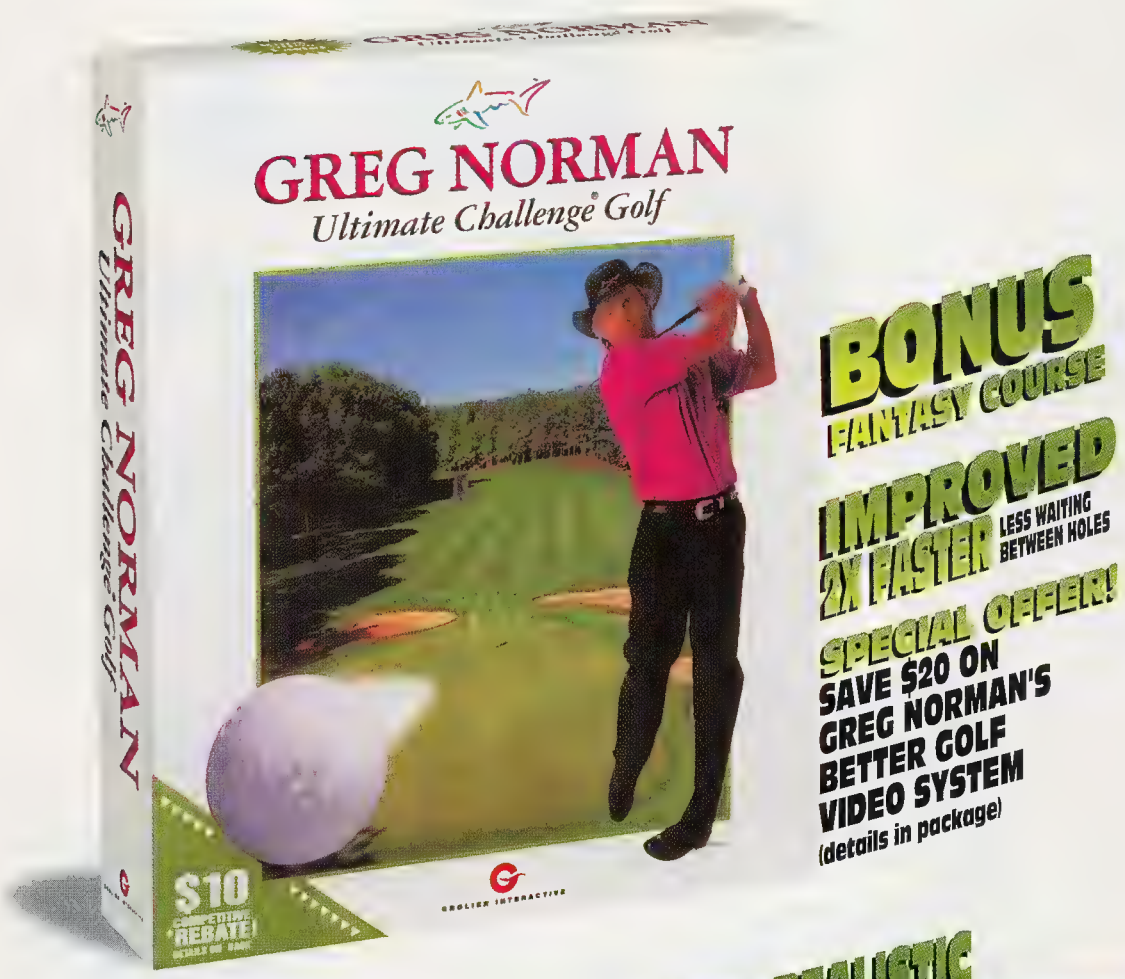

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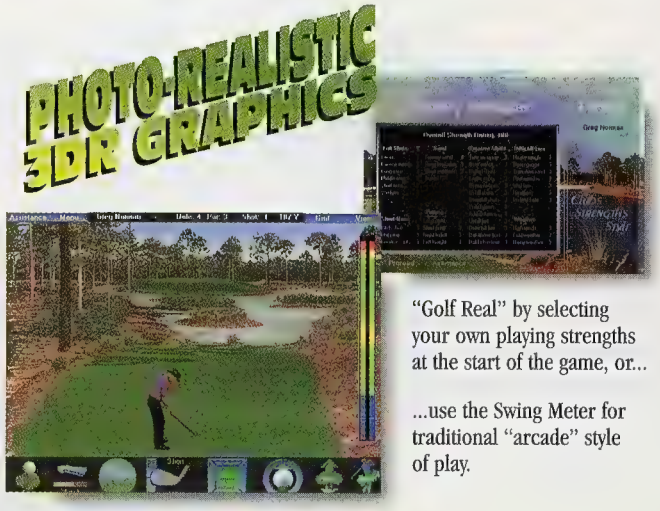

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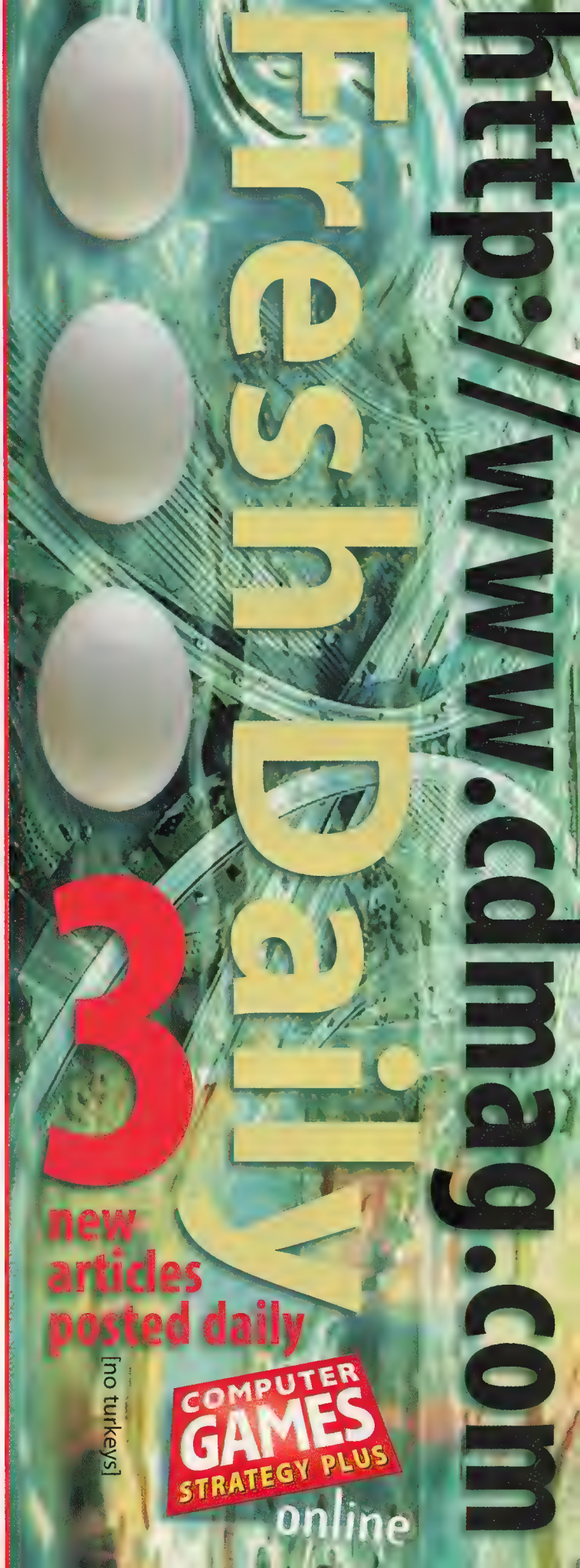
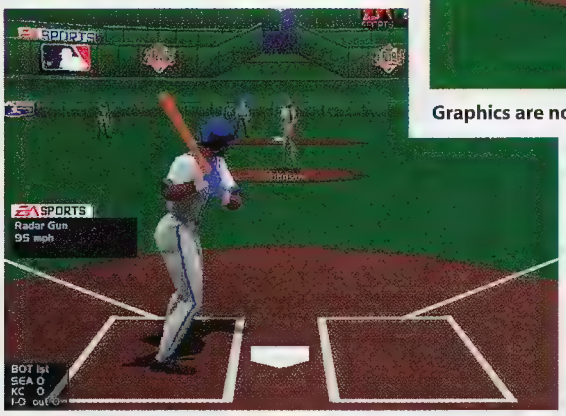


interface problems, are amplified.

However, this is still the best all-around baseball game for the PC. You can almost live with many of the problems – this game is something akin to owning an Italian or English sports car. You put up with all of the shortcomings (spots of oil in the driveway and electrical glitches, respectively) because the overall experience when things *do* work is why you bought it in the first place. When you're hating *Baseball Pro 96,* remember that no other game comes even close to doing all of the things this one does. If you're a baseball *grognard*, face it – this *is* the game you'd design. – *Steve Bauman*

Review:
Triple Play 97
EA Sports Windows 95, DOS ★★½☆☆

Graphics are not a problem with this game



The slick BPI is a highlight

The motto for EA Sports is "If it's in the game, it's in the game." After playing a few games of *Triple Play 97*, it becomes clear that in the modern game, baseball teams have no bullpen, cleanup hitters try two-strike bunts with runners in scoring position, baserunners get doubled off on every line drive, pitchers hit at least five or six batters a game, infielders can't handle a run-down play and about 70% of all hits are to the exact same place in center field.

In other words, here's *another* mediocre arcade baseball game, oh joy. Like last month's *Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball*, *Triple Play 97* comes to the plate with all of the goods – 3D stadiums, MLPA and MLB licenses, superb high-resolution graphics, stand-out sound and a slick batter-pitcher interface. Both games fail because the fundamentals of baseball are so poorly executed, regardless of whether or not you like the accelerated play of an arcade game.

The arcade-ish nature of the game is most obvious in the speed of play. Baserunners run incredibly fast – at least to first-base. Once they round first, though, it's as if they've hit a wall. Worse, every outfielder possesses an arm Raul Mondesi would envy. Line drives go really fast, and there's a really slick curving effect which, while perhaps exaggerated, looks really cool in the medium- or long-range views. Hitting is kind of weird, because opening your stance will force the batter to always pull the ball (regardless of your timing on the swing), and closing the stance will allow you to go the opposite way. Pitchers control their location by moving on the mound (very unrealistic; if this actually happened, every pitcher would give away every pitch). Despite the fact that it takes an Act of God to throw a ball (assuming it doesn't hit the batter in the back), batting and pitching is the highlight of the game. Unfortunately, it's incredibly easy to make contact, even on the hardest level.

Top Ten
NAME TEAM LONGEST
Albert Belle Indians 557
Mark McGwire Athletics 470
Jay Buhner Mariners 464
Tim Salmon Angels 454
Joe Carter Blue Jays 463
Mo Vaughn Red Sox 462
Mike Piazza Dodgers 456
Ken Griffey Jr Mariners 442
Juan Gonzalez Rangers 432
Fred McGriff Braves 409

Albert's the man

The game has obvious roots in the console market (the PlayStation version preceded it by a couple of months). On the plus side, the game has that console feel, with quick and responsive controls and fast animation (on a fast machine). On the down-side, the interface is entirely gamepad- or keyboard-driven, which makes things like changing lineups and editing players a tedious chore (hello, we all own a mouse, OK?).

What *Triple Play 97* does illustrate quite nicely is that there is a fundamental problem with console and PC cross-platform development. The PlayStation has 2 MB of RAM, which is why the statistics are grossly over-simplified (the game doesn't record saves, there are no box scores, hit batsmen are recorded as walks, etc.), but it's in the AI and logic that you notice the inadequacies the most. The PC version has to use memory to render graphics (the PSX has a lot of custom hardware to do this without a lot of RAM), but it seems like a game that requires 8 MB of RAM (12 for Windows 95) should have had the pitcher cover first on a grounder to the first-baseman. Or at the very least it should know how to do a rundown.

There's nothing wrong with a good arcade baseball game. Unfortunately, all of them exist on the Sega Genesis, with Sega's *World Series Baseball* being a standout (the Saturn version has the best batter-pitcher interface on the planet). *Triple Play 97* is a disappointment when compared to that title, and to other PC games currently on the market. While it's no *Earl Weaver Baseball 2.0* (quite possibly the worst baseball game ever for the PC), it ends up proving that developing and designing a game around the limitations of the console can result in utterly mediocre PC games. There's a lot here to like – mostly visually and aurally – but there's so much more which falls short of the expectations of gamers, who've come to expect more of EA Sports. C'mon guys, you're resting on your laurels. – *Steve Bauman*

Review:
NHL PowerPlay 96
Virgin Interactive Windows 95 ★★★½☆

In the world of computer sports games, comparisons are inevitable. Unlike other genres, where rules are made to be broken and new environments are created seemingly with each new release, there's a very definite format here. In computer sports, it's really a matter of which product most closely connects with the real life ideal.

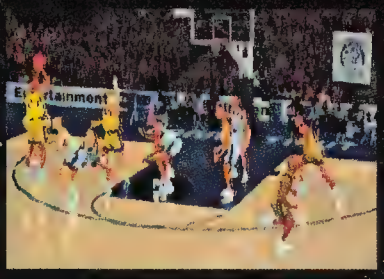
So… with that philosophical preamble out of the way, whaddaya like - flash, or substance? If you're a meat and potatoes PC hockey fanatic, one who can put up with a package heavy on long-term playability but low in the periphery department, there's finally something out there that'll tear you away from EA's *NHL Hockey 96*.

Virgin's *NHL PowerPlay 96* is the latest in a sudden stream of PC hockey games which have poured forth over the course of the last year. Despite its single camera approach, bare-bones game manual and a distinct lack of trappings, it nevertheless conveys the flow, the movement, and the decision-making of the real life sport successfully. It's also a hell of a good time, tremendously fast and full of playmaking variety; that should mean a lengthy hard drive life.

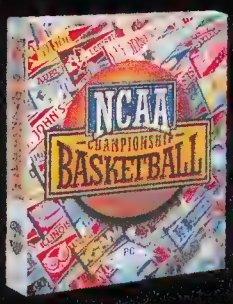
PowerPlay works simply because for the most part, individual players and entire

Advanced artificial intelligence lets you grow players from freshman to senior year.

Network and modem options let you challenge your friends for season or tournament play.



Extensive recruiting feature let's you rebuild your team after each season of play.



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KA AGES 6+

PC CD-ROM

NCAA

teams not under human control do the things they'd do in real life, and that's a step ahead of most everything out there. Strategies and decisions are based on the individual circumstance, meaning it's really difficult to "read" what the program will do next.

For starters, these little guys display the attributes of their real life counterparts in a more convincing fashion than in any other game. Fleury annoys with his persistence, Lemieux impresses with his raw strength and puck-handling skills. Even middle-of-the-road players have their own style, differing from one player to the next, and since skaters do fatigue with time, the same sort of line matching tactics employed in the NHL are a key to success.

Actually scoring a goal calls for persistence, pressure and opportunism. Here,

Who needs multiple camera angles?

there's certainly no substitute for pumping as many shots as possible, but you can forget about always going with the "one-timer" – it remains a valuable weapon, but is by no means the only way to score. The lost art of decking may be just as successful, as may be a deft wrist shot to the open corner. Sometimes, a seemingly harmless, moderately paced shot from outside the face-off circle will find the mark, just like in the real world.

If you're on a power play, patience and puck control is the name of the game. The opposition will settle into a defensive "box" formation, and you'll just have to wait them out. When a penalty-killing unit *does* manage to gobble up a loose biscuit, they'll rag the darned thing forever, only blasting it down the ice when pressured. Oh yeah, don't even bother "sitting" on a lead by cruising around behind your own net where some games allow you to waste gobs of time, because the bad guys will be forechecking in an instant.

When defending, it's often the subtle stuff that gets the job done. Although huge runs at the puck carrier may well result in spectacular collisions, often just holding a good defensive posture will make them think twice about advancing on the net. Don't let the good shooters get in position for a drive, and they usually won't take one. There are a few AI quirks (Jagr and Lemieux backing off on a two-man breakaway sticks in my mind), but generally the artificial intelligence is admirable.

And it has to be, because aside from a smart on-ice product, *PowerPlay* comes up short in other areas. As alluded to earlier, this is no 3-D affair, instead going back to the basics, with an end zone camera which zooms and pans across the ice. Although player animation is motion-captured and quite pleasing, the little buggers are not displayed in high resolution, nor do they carry numbers and logos on their jerseys.

Also, don't expect to see shattering glass, reflections, three-star selections, awesome replays or much of that ultra-glossy stuff of *NHL 96*. Although audio is satisfactory, crowd noise often sounds more like a gathering of the local PTA, while some set-ups may produce skips and clips in the voice of rink announcer John Ashbridge (real life announcer for the Vancouver Canucks).

Off the ice, *PowerPlay* has its ups and downs. An excellent "Coaching Mode" will permit you to assign offensive and defensive strategies before and during each game, and a World Tournament mode pits country against country. But trades, player creation, and season long player stats are nowhere to be found.

In the final analysis, *NHL PowerPlay 96* is not the definitive hockey game. Instead, it offers a distinctly opposing path to the EA product - one where pucks are somewhat smaller than basketballs. And one that may be just right for the thinking PC hockey player. – *Gordon Goble*

▲ **Before the 1st shot, you're offered an overview of the hole**

▼ **Video clips of Greg Norman welcome you to the game**

Review

Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf

Grolier Interactive Windows ★★★½☆

Greg Norman Ultimate Challenge Golf bills itself as "the most realistic golf simulation available," not an "arcade game" like *Links* or *PGA Tour*. By this statement, they refer to the fact that there is no swing meter in the simulation game (a more traditional arcade game is also included). Instead, the emphasis here is on course management – that is, the ability to intelligently exploit the opportunities and hazards hidden in each hole of a golf course.

The game includes two courses, The Medalist, Norman's home course, and a fantasy (nightmare?) course called Dorset Cliffs. Each course offers a wide variety of tee and pin placements to keep the game fresh, especially when the wildly divergent weather conditions are accounted for (heat, precipitation, and winds all factor into game play).

As a learning tool, this product excels. You can set up a computer golfer to match your own playing strengths and weaknesses. Are you a long driver with accuracy problems? Do you chip onto the green with ease but then consistently three-putt? In all, there are at least forty different factors that your on-screen persona can reflect, plus an overall playing style setting. Alternatively, you can play as Greg Norman, with all his strengths and weaknesses already set-up [*does he choke in big games? - ed*].

During game play, you pick your intended target spot, figuring in wind, the ball lie (including, for once, stance problems), what sort of spin you'd like to put on the ball, and various other options (the game even models three different types of golf ball). Then click the swing icon and the program handles the rest.

When you get tired of taking golf this seriously, there is the arcade game that includes a traditional swing meter. The meter is divided into green, yellow and red sections representing the difficulty of the shot. As the indicator moves up through these sections, it varies in speed (slowest in the green and fastest in the red). After clicking for distance, the indicator returns at the speed it was moving at the time of the power click. This makes hitting a straight shot at maximum (red zone) power quite difficult.

The biggest problem with the game is its lack of computer opponent. You'll have to invite your golfing buddies over if you want some competition. Also, putting seems a bit off. Even the Norman player muffs an awful lot of putts in the simulator mode.

All told, this is a fine program for players who take their (real world) golf seriously. The lack of a computer opponent means that duffers looking for some light entertainment will probably want to opt for *Links LS* or one of the other titles headed our way. If you want to learn and practice course management, though, this is the title for you. – *Peter Smith*

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http://www.lglass.com

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Net Obsession

Dear S+:

Your magazine is the best out there. I love it, but I notice you generally ignore the possibilities of the internet. I just want to mention a few programs and let you try them out for yourselves. *Netrek* is the grandaddy of internet games. It is played on the internet, with up to 16 players at once! The graphics might not be the best, but is has lots of strategy and a lot of chaos. It takes a while to get used to, but THIS GAME ROCKS!

Kali is also a nice program. It is not a game, but it allows you to play games normally played only on a network to be multiplayer on the internet. Example: *Warcraft 2*, I want to play with *both* friend Bob and friend George, but we don't have a network. Kali lets you play network games (*Warcraft 2*, *C&C*, *DOOM*, *Duke*, *Quake*, etc...) over the internet. Cool, right, Then there are the usual chess clients, bridge, hearts, etc..(Yawn) But you never even mention those things. Maybe just put Kali or a *Netrek* client on your monthly CD, PLEASE?

Josh Smith
bps@math.ksu.edu

Dear Josh,
Please also note that Accolade's recent Deadlock *is now Kali-capable as well; there was an internet furor over the initial multiplayer options available for the game apparently, which has now been addressed. Kali is an excellent system; we've reported on it periodically and will continue to do so. - ed.*

Kill more trees, please

Dear S+:

I have been reading SPlus for a while and I must first say that you'll are my favorite among the five or so computer mags that I read monthly. But enough of flattery, as the real reason that I'm sending the email is to find out about what gives with Sierra and their online manuals? If they are taking out the paper manuals, why are their games still as expensive? I just purchased *Cyberstorm* and it is a good game which runs superbly; I must compliment them on that, as I had stopped purchasing Sierra games because they sucked (*Outpost*, *Space Bucks*, etc.). But can you comment on the online manual?

Derek E. Reeves Email:
Der3370@ritvax.isc.rit.edu
4th Year Mechanical Engineering Rochester Institute of Technology

Dearest Derek,
Two things. First, the online manuals may not cost as much to print, but they certainly do still take time to conceive and construct. Once you get used to using them, they're not such a bad idea. Microsoft went this way with Office 4.20 *a few years back and no-one complained; no reason game software can't follow suit. Second, if you've been to the Pacific Northwest lately, you'll notice lots of trees missing. Some of us would rather have them in the forest instead of in game manuals. Related – paper costs have gone up quite spectacularly lately. This could be a factor for all involved. Thanks for writing in! - ed.*

You can never go too fast

Dear S+:

I bought the August issue yesterday at EB. There's a lot of E3 stuff in it which was fine - but then I got to Command Post - decent review of Waterloo, a GREAT hints and tips of TacOps - a review of Duke Nuke 'em where you have three people other than the reviewer giving their opinions (I liked this idea but it kinda didn't work all the time with the now defunct Computer Game Review) - The Hangar - and Air Combat Advisor. All Good old boring text articles that have formed the heart of Strategy Plus for so long - and the things that make me keep on buying it.

One criticism - how the heck can you review AH Longbow without mentioned the awful frame rates? I Have a P166 with a Millenium video card and I have to crank down the features to get a decent frame rate.

"David V. Watts" <dwatts@mnsinc.com

Dear David,
Good to hear from you! Is *the frame rate on* Longbow *awful? Not on a Pentium Pro! All options turned on, highest available res…smooth as glass. You should want one, now – or wait for the Klamath MMX-capable chip coming in 1997. - ed*

Everyone wants a piece of the action

Dear S+:

With regards to the review of *Battleground: Waterloo* by Scott Udell. My friend had an interesting criticism of the game. Cavalry is too important in the sense that it can be held as a permanent threat in the rear. He thought that it would have been more realistic for infantry to have the chance to form into squares during the cavalry charge phase. This makes charges more realistic and risky. Of course, the infantry would form squares based on morale, etc. I feel that this probably would have been a more realistic representation of cavalry.

seawolf@io.org
Theodore Kang

Dear Theodore,
Good point, but then again the ancient title Fields of Glory *allowed for that and other good 19th-century style tactical specialties, and look where it got* that *game. Everyone makes choices, and there's* always *something to carp about. Thanks for the fish in any event! - ed.*

A True Civil Servant

Dear S+:

Hacking Both The Shareware and Registered Versions of Quake using only a simple text editor such as DOS's EDIT :

Save a game in quake in a level you're stuck on or just want to complete, then open up your text editor. Go to File Open and look in the *Quake* directory for a sub-directory called ID1, then open up your saved game; it will be called something like sav0.sav. Use a search option to find the word "health" – this is the part of the file where all the important data is held. You can change your health to anything up to 999%. Then there is the weapon value; this is the amount of ammo you have with the weapon you're using; set this to 100 then currentammo to 100, ammo_shells to 100, ammo_nails 100 and ammo_rockets 100 (100 is the maximum ammo for any weapon).

The next important value is "items" – this determines your weapons, your keys and any runes you have, to say but a few. Here are some useful values :

"items" "37951.000000" = Silver key
"items" "397609.000000" = Gold + Silver Keys, super nailgun, shotgun and rocket launcher
"items" "266793.000000" =As above + rune

So, an example of this section of the saved games file would be :

"health" "900.000000"
"weapon" "100.000000"
"weaponmodel" "progs/v_rock2.mdl"
"currentammo" "100.000000"
"ammo_shells" "100.000000"
"ammo_nails" "100.000000"
"ammo_rockets" "100.000000"
"items" "397609.000000"

End of known hack.

I am working on a level skip, however I am still in the early stages of this, I can move from level to level but I am still working on the coordinates of where you arrive in the level. To do this, search for all references to "m" followed by the number of the level you saved in. You can then change that number to any level you want. I also imagine if you want to swap episodes you can just change the number after the "e" to the desired episode. However, until I manage to get the coordinates sorted out you can get dropped in impossible places! I reckon I am pretty close to a breakthrough with this problem.

Ali Hann
e-mail : - RAP_Hann@msn.com

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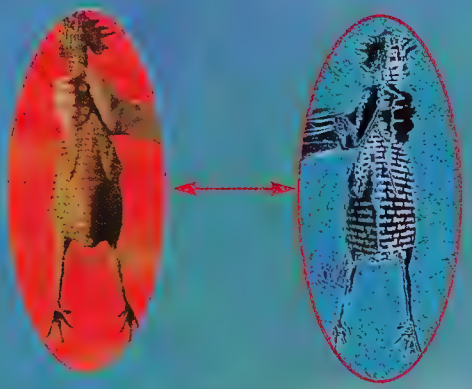

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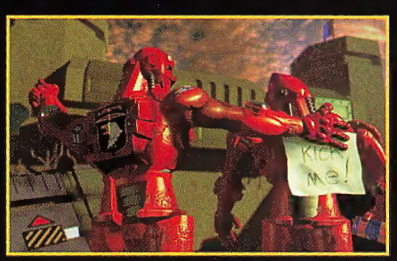

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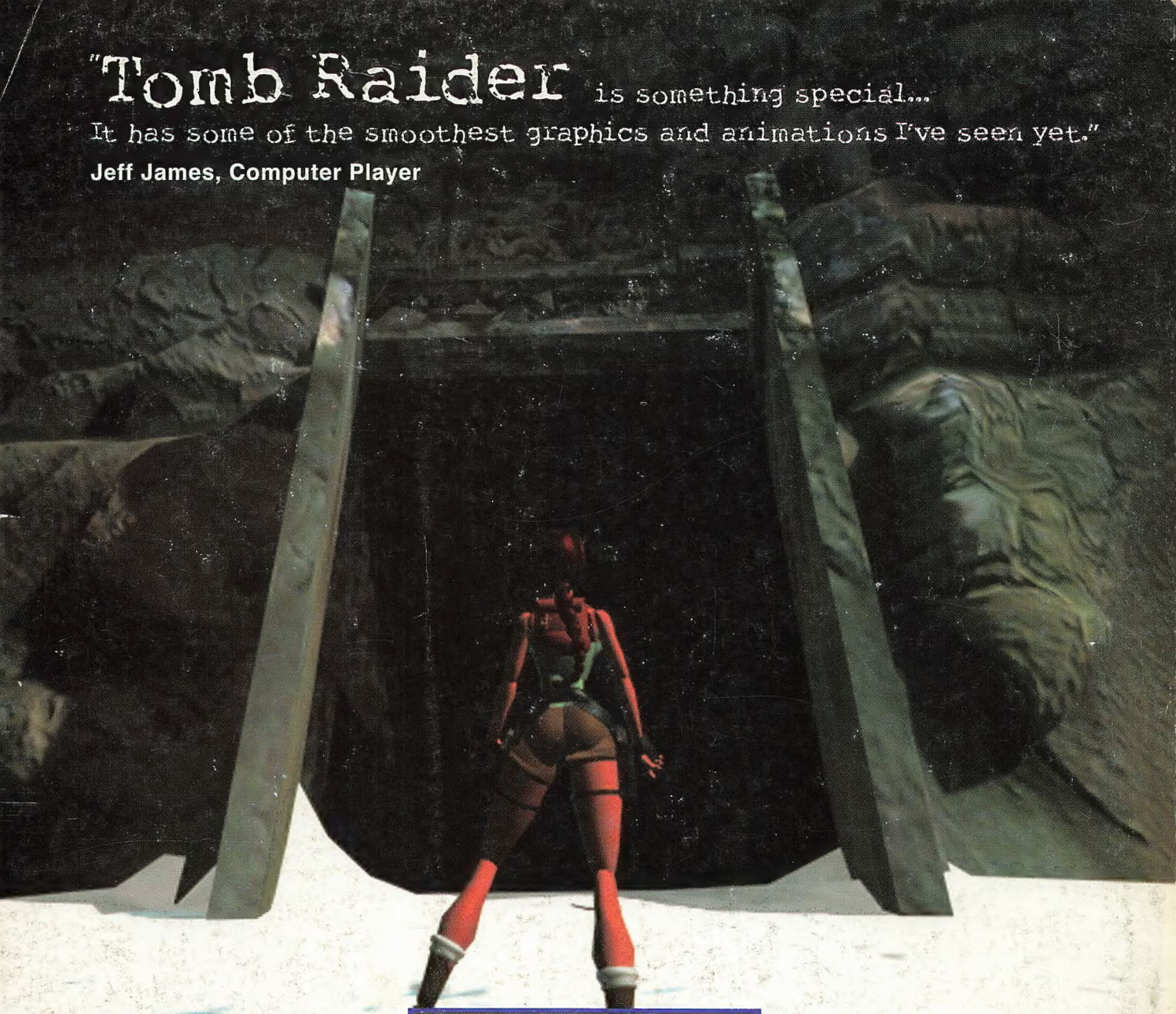

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